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WILL THEY CARRY THE MAGA AGENDA?

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Words Matter: God, Family, Country
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Jimmy Carter: Handmaiden of the Deep State
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The New American

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Publisher
Steve Bonta

Editor-in-Chief
Gary Benoit

Managing Editor
John T. Larabell

Senior Editors
Paul Dragu • William F. Jasper
Alex Newman • Rebecca Terrell

Copy Editor
Liana Stanley

Contributors
Bob Adelmann • Dennis Behreandt
Steve Byas • Raven Clabough
D. Michael DeRidder
Selwyn Duke • Brian Farmer
Christian Gomez • William P. Hoar
R. Cort Kirkwood • Patrick Krey, J.D.
Veronika Kyrylenko • James Murphy
Annalisa Pesek • Dr. Duke Pesta
Peter Rykowski • Michael Tennant
Fr. James Thornton • Laurence M. Vance
Joe Wolverton II, J.D.

Creative Director
Joseph W. Kelly

Art Director
Katie Bradley

Graphic Designers
Lindsey McConnell
Jacob Vang

Advertising/Circulation Manager
Julie DuFrane

The New American

Printed in the U.S.A. • ISSN 0885-6540
P.O. Box 8040 • Appleton, WI 54912

920-749-3784
1-855-392-2666 (fax)
www.thenewamerican.com
editorial@thenewamerican.com

Rates are $59 per year (Canada, add $9; foreign, add $27) Copyright ©2025 by American Opinion Publishing, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Appleton, WI and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send any address changes to *The New American*, P.O. Box 8040, Appleton, WI 54912.

JBS.org

The New American is published twice monthly by American Opinion Publishing Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of The John Birch Society.

It's Time for Activism

Came the MAGA revolution, and suddenly America seems poised to turn the corner on decades of utopian globalism abroad and stifling socialism at home. MAGA's strutting champion has vanquished the lying propagandists and censors, the corrupt judges, the weaponized minions of the Justice Department, the violent mobs, and even a pair of rifle-wielding assassins. He has unseated for the second time the damnable Clinton-Obama-Biden dynasty, and unsettled the smugly confident Deep State combine. Joining him in his triumphal rout is a promising new crop of America First GOP congressmen and a welter of new appointees who, rhetorically at least, appear to have Trump's back and the best interests of the American people in mind.

Americans are justified in feeling a measure of satisfaction in these events. While far from a perfect candidate, Trump is doubtless sincere in his antipathy for globalists and his long-overdue advocacy of America first — the first such president in living memory. While far from a flawless enterprise, the MAGA movement, at times both fractured and fractious, is united by a desire to restore America-centric policies, and animated by resistance to radical elitists and indifferent Big Government. And while far from being unanimous in opposition to the status quo, both houses of Congress appear to have more elected members than at any time in recent history who are genuinely constitutionalists, and who want to reverse the direction of the runaway train of government spending.

All of these we at *The New American* view as largely positive developments. But there are also trend lines that give cause for concern. For one thing, even as a certain portion of the Republican Party becomes more and more consistently constitutional, the Democrats have become radicalized as never before. This is neither partisan nor anecdotal; in our latest Freedom Index (published in our last issue), only two Democrats — one in the House and one in the Senate — scored other than a zero! This, to my knowledge, has never happened before. The few Democrats who clung to some semblance of constitutional fealty (Manchin and Sinema in the Senate come to mind) have been driven from the Democratic Party and from office.

On the other hand, the number of GOP representatives and senators with a perfect, 100-percent Freedom Index rating has grown significantly; for the most recent index, it was 10 for the Senate and 17 for the House. An additional 12 senators had 90 percent or better (meaning that almost one quarter of the Senate got an "A" grade where freedom and the Constitution are concerned), and the House had an additional 10 "A students." While these latter statistics are certainly grounds for optimism, they also point to how bitterly and deeply divided our nation has become, and the ferociously partisan warfare — across the aisle, and also directed at Donald Trump and his supporters — may be a portent of worse things to come. After all, the radical Left is not about to surrender its hard-gotten gains without a vicious fight, no matter what a majority of Americans want.

And then there's the legacy media, as mendacious and morally bankrupt as ever. Their epitaph has been written too many times to count, but their value to the entrenched Deep State far outweighs any balance-sheet shortfalls stemming from their decline in popularity. They will continue to be bankrolled, even at steep losses, by the George Soroses of the world, to make sure that the lies of the Left continue to sound in every ear and be seared onto every eyeball.

Not only that, but Trump and many of his epigones may be Americanist, but they lack understanding — of the Constitution, of the nature of the enemy, and of sound legal and economic principles — and cannot be relied upon to consistently uphold their oaths of office, their good intentions notwithstanding. Now, more than ever, the messages of consistent constitutionalism and principled Americanism need re-emphasizing.

This is where we come in. In this issue, we give honest looks, free of partisan delirium, at Trump's Cabinet nominees. We evaluate their prospects for success. And, as always, we caution against unbridled optimism. Now, more than ever, is the time for vigilant patriotism, including increased outreach and education and informed activism. Americans have finally awakened from a slumber of generations. It remains for them — and their elected leadership — to gain understanding.

— *Steve Bonta*

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Biden Awards Presidential Citizens Medals

The Associated Press reported on January 2 that, in a ceremony that day, then-President Joe Biden awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal to 20 recipients. The medal "was created by President Richard Nixon in 1969 and is the country's second highest civilian honor after the Presidential Medal of Freedom. It recognizes people who 'performed exemplary deeds of service for their country or their fellow citizens,'" noted AP.

Among the recipients were former GOP Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming and current Democratic Representative Bennie Thompson of Mississippi. Both were honored for their work on the J6 Committee, which "investigated" the January 6, 2021 protest at the U.S. Capitol.

However, the House Oversight Committee had concluded in a probe into the J6 Committee that Cheney tampered with a witness and must be investigated by the FBI for suborning perjury from that witness; and Thompson is an unrepentant insurrectionist who defended cop killers and terrorists who planned to wage war against the U.S. government.

The Oversight panel found that Cheney unethically communicated with key witness Cassidy Hutchinson, who then lied to the committee about the events of January 6, and that Hutchinson altered her testimony to fit the committee's bogus "insurrection" narrative. "Based on the evidence obtained … numerous federal laws were likely broken by Liz Cheney, the former Vice Chair of the January 6 Select Committee, and these violations should be investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation," Oversight determined.

Bennie Thompson, recounted news website Just the News, was a key supporter of the terrorist Republic of New Africa (RNA), a group that planned in the 1970s to take over several Southern states and "create a secessionist new country for African-Americans." Among other crimes, in 1971, RNA members murdered policeman Louis Skinner when they opened fire on FBI agents and local police raiding an RNA house.

In 2013, while a Democratic congressman, the remorseless Thompson supported and campaigned for former RNA vice president Chokwe Lumumba for mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, and "officiated" at his installation.

Liz Cheney and Joe Biden

AP Images

NYC Spent Millions on Deportation Defense for Migrants

Bim/iStock/Getty Images Plus

It's not enough that New York City has spent billions of dollars on hotel rooms for illegals. It's not enough that the Big Apple shelled out more than $50 million on prepaid credit cards for migrants. It's not enough that New York has offered illegals driver's licenses. NYC has also been spending millions providing lawyers to defend the interlopers against deportation.

The Daily Caller reported on January 9 that the city's "taxpayers shelled out $17,350,000 in fiscal year 2022, $16,600,000 in fiscal year 2023, and another $16,600,000 in fiscal year 2024 for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)." That group is "made up of attorneys that provide free counsel to foreign nationals in immigration proceedings [and] specialize in providing representation to [those] who've been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)."

The program is effective, too, according to immigration activist website The Bronx Defenders: "Studies have found that 97% of detained immigrants without legal representation are unsuccessful in challenging their deportation. Access to counsel, on the other hand, can improve the chance of winning a deportation case by as much as 1000%."

As the Daily Caller noted, "Hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants have flocked to the Big Apple in the past several years, spurring officials to pour billions [into] food, shelter, travel and various other government-funded accommodations. The wave of illegal migration into New York City — an attractive jurisdiction for many undocumented individuals due to its liberal sanctuary city laws — eventually forced the city to not only tighten restrictions on shelter stays, but also prompted Mayor Eric Adams in September 2023 to announce sweeping 5% budget cuts to every agency."

In spite of the billions the city spends to accommodate illegals, most of the electorate doesn't want radical immigrationist policies. They support immigrationist politicians based on other concerns, such as abortion, gun control, etc., often not realizing that it's a package deal. Electing a Governor Kathy Hochul, for instance, means many things, pro-illegal-alien priorities among them.

Comedienne Skewers CNN on New Year's Eve Broadcast

Comedienne Whitney Cummings skewered CNN on the network's special New Year's Eve broadcast centering on the famous ball-drop in New York's Times Square. She also slammed Democrats, Hollywood, and the mainstream media.

Speaking with longtime CNN stalwart Anderson Cooper and sidekick Andy Cohen of the Bravo TV network, Cummings blasted CNN's low ratings, which cratered after Donald Trump's election win in November. "I'm now playing, you know, like 3,000-seat theaters, which is about the viewership of CNN these days," she quipped.

Referencing the Democrats' decision to keep backing Biden for reelection despite his fully apparent cognitive decline, Cummings said they "couldn't hold a primary this year. They were too busy holding up a body." Plus, "The pro-choice party didn't give their voters one when it came to their candidate," she cracked. "Kamala was forced on us so hard you'd think she was patented by Pfizer."

Whitney Cummings with Andy Cohen and Anderson Cooper

Whitney Cummings/YouTube

Cummings then mocked Hollywood's tendency to be preachy, saying, "There's this new thing where everything in Hollywood has to, like, lecture people how to vote and make you feel guilty about global warming."

Encapsulating what she had to rush through on her CNN set, Cummings listed on X some of the "things mainstream media will never cover": "The first [T]rump shooter didn't have any silverware in his house." "The Crown prince of Saudi Arabia put money into Disney." "Why is fluoride still in our water?" "Monsanto paid Google to skew search results."

The Daily Beast on January 1 referred to her segment as a "wild, conspiracy theory-filled roast."

It's not the first time CNN's live New Year's Eve broadcast has had some controversy attached to it. Obnoxious comedienne Kathy Griffin co-hosted with Cooper from 2008 until 2016, and routinely ruffled feathers at the network with her bawdy sensibilities and vulgar language, even using the f-word on live television. CNN removed her from the show in 2017 after she released a publicity photo of herself holding a prop made to look like the severed head of Donald Trump.

Canada Considers Taking Organs From Live Assisted-suicide Patients

Canadian doctors, having accepted medical assistance in dying (MAiD), the country's assisted-suicide regime, are now considering whether to harvest organs from euthanasia patients before they have died, The Federalist reported January 8.

The doctors reason thus: Organs are normally removed from a donor as soon as possible after death to ensure they are in the best possible condition for transplant. If organs were removed from a live person, they would be in even better condition. And if that patient is about to die voluntarily anyway, what's the harm in killing him by taking his organs?

"The best use of my organs, if I'm going to receive a medically assisted death, might be to not first kill me and then retrieve my organs, but to have my mode of death — as we medically consider death now — to be to retrieve my organs," said Rob Sibbald, an ethicist at Ontario's London Health Sciences Centre. (Notably, Canada's Criminal Code defines MAiD as the administration of a "substance" that causes death; therefore, killing a patient by harvesting his organs would not qualify as MAiD.)

Canada is the leading country for post-euthanasia organ transplants, and in Quebec, 14 percent of organ donors in 2022 were MAiD patients. So why the push for more organs when euthanized Canadians are already donating? For one thing, the country's socialized healthcare system has a chronic organ shortage. For another, there's big money in both MAiD and organ trafficking.

photographereddie/iStock/Getty Images Plus

"MAiD is a huge money-making business — now they're saving money on future healthcare," Heather Hancock, a disabled Canadian who said she was pressured to let doctors kill her, told The Federalist. "They're literally denying us healthcare treatment and offering us MAiD instead."

Angelina Ireland, whom The Federalist identified as "executive director of the Delta Hospice Society, an end-of-life care facility that the Canadian government shut down and then took over for not terminating its patients," said, "You can get big, big money on the world market" for human organs. "We have opened ourselves to some horrific stuff." ■

QUICK QUOTES

"Every medical treatment has a risk, even taking aspirin. There is always going to be a percentage of the population under any medical treatment that's going to suffer harm."

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in December in United States v. Skrmetti*, a case involving a Tennessee law that prohibits gender-mutilating treatments for minors. Justice* **Sonia Sotomayor** *compared the consequences of these operations — intended to be destructive and life-altering — to unintentional side effects of standard medications. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who couldn't define "woman" during her 2022 confirmation hearings, compared the case to a law banning interracial relationships.*

"Today's results paint a horrifying picture. American students had the lowest test scores in two decades. Another big takeaway is that not every country lost ground in the 'pandemic era' ... a lot of countries actually improved. The United States did not.... This should be a wakeup call for the education bureaucracy. Quit bending the knee to the radical demands of teachers unions and put our nation's future leaders front and center."

Education and the Workforce Committee Chairwoman Representative **Virginia Foxx** *(R-N.C.) commented on the December release of the quadrennial report "Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies," a comparison of U.S. students' performance to that of pupils in other countries. She failed to mention that the solution would be to end the federal government's intervention in education, where it has no constitutional jurisdiction.*

"The DOE loan would provide an important boost to the U.S. automotive industrial base, enabling significant job creation and investment that is important for the United States to maintain its leadership as electric vehicles become a strategically important industry."

In a press release announcing receipt of a $6.6 billion loan from the U.S. Department of Energy, electric vehicle manufacturer **Rivian** *painted a rosy albeit delusional picture of EVs, which the company has already proven it cannot produce without colossal government handouts. Between 2016 and 2024, it tore through nearly $2.4 billion in subsidies, and still had to cancel expansion plans and lay off workers due to missed production and sales targets.*

"Over those three studies, what we really established is that gratitude is good for your heart.... The fact that it actually changes your body physically was new information to me."

University of Iowa Professor **Harleah Buck** *recently published results of years-long research conducted with University of Florida College of Nursing Assistant Professor Lakeshia Cousin about the positive health effects of being grateful.*

"Now it's how to get the money out as fast as possible before they [the Trump administration] come in and, like, stop it all.... It's like we're on the *Titanic* and we're throwing gold bars off the edge."

Brent Efron*, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency special advisor for implementation, bragged to an undercover Project Veritas reporter about his agency funneling billions in grants to leftist environmental nonprofits during the Biden administration's lame-duck period.*

— Compiled by Rebecca Terrell

TRUMP'S TOP STAFF PICKS

WILL THEY CARRY THE MAGA AGENDA?

Many Americans have high hopes for Trump's second term, but will his Cabinet live up to those expectations? Here we look at some of his picks for key positions.

by Paul Dragu

Donald Trump has made many promises to the American voters. He has said that, as the 47th president, he'll deport illegals, vanquish the Deep State, end the Russia-Ukraine war, free innocent J6ers, even out the lopsided trade deficit with China, make America healthy again, clean up the rot within the Department of Justice (DOJ), "drill baby drill," and more.

In other words, Trump's pitch to the American voters was the promise of a complete upending of the corrupt, moronic, and possibly treasonous policies of the Joe Biden administration. Voters responded with a resounding, "You're hired!"

Of course, Trump's potential to deliver on his promises will depend on, in large part, the men and women he hires to fill his Cabinet. During a marathon conversation with podcaster Joe Rogan just before Election Day 2024, the 78-year-old Trump did an unusual thing. He admitted that during his first presidential term he hired some people he shouldn't have. Names such as John Bolton, Rex Tillerson, H.R. McMaster, and Mike Pompeo come to mind.

Has Trump learned to avoid hiring people who don't buy into the America First agenda? Here we'll look at some of Trump's most important Cabinet choices, and you can decide for yourself.

AP Images

He's back: Against formidable odds, Trump made it back to the White House, and he's ready to implement his America First agenda. While his intentions certainly seem good, some of his Cabinet picks might not be.

Susie Wiles

Shortly after Election Day, Trump appointed his camera-shy campaign manager, Susie Wiles, as chief of staff. Wiles is credited, in large part, with bringing focus, organization, and discipline to Trump's reelection campaign.

The chief of staff helps execute the administration's agenda. Wiles will also have a say in who gains access to the president. That type of gatekeeping power has some in MAGA Land worried, given Wiles' Establishment pedigree. Former Trump campaign strategist Steve Bannon said on his *War Room* show, shortly after the announcement of her appointment, that Wiles' comment about keeping the "clown car away from the White House" might be code for keeping MAGA purists away from Trump.

Wiles is the daughter of legendary NFL broadcaster Pat Summerall. In 1980, she worked as a scheduler for Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign. In 1988, she was the deputy director of operations for Dan Quayle's vice-presidential campaign. Wiles also worked under the late New York Representative Jack Kemp back in the 1970s, and for Jacksonville, Florida, Mayors John Delaney and John Peyton. She ran Senator Rick Scott's successful campaign for governor of Florida in 2010. When Mitt Romney ran for president in 2012, she served as co-chair of his Florida advisory council. She also had a brief stint running the 2012 presidential campaign of former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman. And she has championed environmental causes and created support for more government spending on local services.

Wiles has an extensive record as a lobbyist. She represented 42 clients, including corporations, government contractors, and business associations, between 2017 and 2024, according to a report from Public Citizen, a nonprofit consumer-advocacy organization.

Wiles joined Trump's campaign team in Florida in 2016, a decision that prompted some head scratching among the political class. Republican consultant Tim Miller told the *Tampa Bay Times* that Trump was so far removed from the ideology he knew Wiles subscribed to that he couldn't understand how she could work for him. Wiles' excuse was that the GOP had fallen into "expediency culture," which she believed would seriously damage the country, and that Trump was the change vehicle the party needed.

After Trump's 2016 victory, Wiles stayed in Florida and managed Ron DeSantis' successful campaign for governor. She and DeSantis, however, had a falling out afterward. She came back into the Trump orbit just in time to defeat DeSantis in the GOP presidential primary.

Marco Rubio

Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) is Trump's pick for secretary of state, a position considered to be the most important diplomat in the world. Rubio is a poster boy for neoconservatism, the exact type of person who makes the MAGA faithful question whether Trump has learned his lesson.

The secretary of state is fourth in the line of succession to serve as president, after the speaker of the House. He leads the U.S. Department of State, the primary agency responsible for foreign affairs. U.S. foreign policy has been a major vehicle for bringing about a global government. The U.S. military has more than 800 official bases on foreign soil, and about 200,000 mili-

Paul Dragu is a senior editor for The New American.

tary personnel stationed outside the United States. Rubio's voting record indicates he doesn't usually have a problem with this. In December 2023, he voted against bringing U.S. troops back home and out of Syria. Two months before that, he voted against pulling troops out of Niger.

Much to the chagrin of noninterventionists, Rubio is an interventionist. Back in 2016, in response to Trump's position that the United States gives more than it gets from its interactions with the international community, he said, "The world without American engagement is a world none of us wants to live with." During Trump's first term, Rubio also co-sponsored legislation that would make it more difficult for Trump to withdraw from NATO by requiring two-thirds of the Senate to ratify a withdrawal.

Rubio is also a China hawk. His Senate biography describes him as someone who is "leading the charge to rebalance our relationship with Communist China." In his most recent report on the country's industrial policy, he said, "Through theft, market distorting subsidies, and strategic planning, Beijing now leads in many of the industries that will determine geopolitical supremacy in the 21st century." In 2020, China targeted Rubio and other U.S. officials during a round of tit-for-tat sanctions between Beijing and Washington.

Regarding the Middle East, Rubio has criticized Iran and staunchly supported Israel.

Rubio has served as a U.S. senator for more than a decade, and his votes aligned with the Constitution 66 percent of the time, according to *TNA's* Freedom Index. As *TNA* pointed out more than 10 years ago, Rubio has never been in danger of being confused for a proponent of limited government. However, there is hope, or perhaps a glimmer of it. In April 2024, Rubio voted against the $95 billion foreign aid package for Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. He's also made comments indicating agreement with Trump that the war in Eastern Europe needs to end. He told NBC News in late September, "Unfortunately the reality of it is that the way the war in Ukraine is going to end is with a negotiated settlement."

Also, during consideration of the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) proposed an amendment to clarify that a NATO treaty doesn't supersede the constitutional requirement for a congressional declaration of war. The amendment failed, but Rubio was among the 16 who voted for it.

AP Images

The right man for the job? While he is certainly an effective communicator, Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) has strong neoconservative tendencies. Trump's picking him for secretary of state has some of the MAGA base scratching their heads.

Tom Homan and Stephen Miller

Whatever concerns the MAGA faithful might have about Rubio or other Trump Cabinet picks, they are unlikely to feel the same way about Tom Homan and Stephen Miller.

Homan will oversee the mass deportations Americans were promised. And given his track record and matching rhetoric, there's little reason to doubt he's the right man for the job.

Homan has been a police officer, a Border Patrol agent, and a special agent with the former Immigration and Naturalization Service. He served as acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in 2017, and was also Trump's senior immigration official during his first term.

As far as carrying out Trump's deportation agenda, Homan said he will prioritize public safety and national security threats. That alone will be quite a task. In December 2024, news outlets reported about an illegal from Guatemala who lit a sleeping subway passenger on fire and calmly watched as she burned to death. Before that, numerous bouts of violence by illegals rocked the Big Apple. In a September letter to Representative Tony Gonzales (R-Texas), Immigration and Customs Enforcement Deputy Director Patrick Lechleitner noted that at least 435,000 illegal-alien criminals are roaming about in the United States — and those are just the ones officials know about.

Mainstream media have tried to smear Homan as a heartless cop who gets a kick out of separating poor, innocent migrant families. On October 27, he appeared on *60 Minutes*, where the interviewer asked if there was a way to carry out mass deportations without separating families. Homan's answer: "Of course there is. Families can be deported together." Then he made the commonsense argument that even citizens who commit crimes are separated from their children when they're arrested.

The immigration battle is going to get intense. Leftist activist lawyers have for months worked to draw up obstructive strategies. Becca Heller, founder of the International Refugee Assistance Project, told *The New York Times*, "We literally have a blueprint of what they are planning to do, and so we had months and months to figure out how to protect people." Lee Gelernt, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union, said his organization has spent the last nine months planning for a Trump presidency and is "prepared to go to court as often as necessary." The lawsuits are expected to come in fast and pile up high the moment Homan and company hit the ground running.

Stephen Miller, another anti-illegal-immigration bulldog, has been appointed as deputy chief of staff for policy. He is credited with shaping Trump's immigration policies during his first tenure in the White House. Miller is expected to play a major role in staffing the government — especially areas that intersect with immigration policy.

Before joining Trump's 2016 campaign, Miller worked for several congressional Republicans, including former Representatives Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) and John Shadegg (R-Ariz.), and former Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.). After Trump's first term, Miller launched the America First Legal Foundation (AFL), a litigation outfit that challenged several Biden administration policies and other illegal and despotic behavior on the part of public and private entities. AFL sued to stop the Biden administration's "catch-and-release" border policy during the Covid-19 pandemic. In conjunction with 16 attorneys general, the group also sued and eventually won a lawsuit to stop the Biden administration's attempt to grant mass amnesty to illegals. AFL also sued and won to have the Arizona secretary of state produce a list of illegals who were registered to vote, and with another lawsuit prompted United Airlines to backtrack on racist DEI hiring practices.

AP Images

Rule of law: Tom Homan, Trump's pick for "border czar," is not afraid to enforce American immigration laws and deport illegal immigrants. The MAGA base loves him for this, and the Left hates him.

Tulsi Gabbard & John Ratcliffe

In 2020, former CIA Director John Brennan joined a group of 51 "intelligence community" veterans and signed a letter charging that news reports in the *New York Post* about damaging information on Hunter Biden's laptop smacked of "Russian disinformation." This was false. The laptop was real, and the contents within were genuine.

This episode illustrates the condition of America's intelligence community. Intelligence agencies have become so rotten that they can no longer even pretend to be a legitimate benefit to the public. Patriotic Americans hope Trump's picks will change this.

Former Democratic Representative and presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard is Trump's choice for director of national intelligence. Some commentators have dubbed this the most important appointment. Gabbard, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves, will oversee the nation's massive intelligence apparatus. Her nomination comes with the hope that she'll find out and disclose just how much American intelligence agencies are spying on Americans and causing mischief abroad.

The 43-year-old Hawaiian is a former member of the globalist-oriented foreign-policy think tank Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which has been integral to the construction of a global government. She was also listed in the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders program, a designation she says happened without her permission or knowledge.

Gabbard left the Democratic Party in 2022. She is a longtime critic of U.S. military and foreign policy, and possesses an understanding of who's really in charge. In July, while speaking to Fox pundit Laura Ingraham, Gabbard said the Deep State was running the military-industrial complex: "Our foreign policy decisions are being made by unelected people in the military-industrial complex, who are profiting from us being in a constant state of war, and the national security state that has more power to undermine our freedoms and liberties when we are in a state of war."

Gabbard's congressional tenure lasted from 2013 to 2020. As a legislator, she amassed an abysmal score of 29 percent in *TNA's* Freedom Index, meaning her votes aligned with the U.S. Constitution only 29 percent of the time. Her record indicates a soft spot for climate-change measures. In September 2020, she voted for the Clean Economy Jobs and Innovation Act, a 1,206-page climate bill that aimed to reduce net greenhouse-gas emissions to zero by 2050, which aligns with the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A year earlier, she voted against a bill that would have annulled the Paris climate agreement.

But when it comes to issues more aligned with her prospective position as director of national intelligence, Gab-

AP Images

Conservative? Tulsi Gabbard's recent departure from the Democratic Party and her support for Trump have certainly made waves, but her liberal views on many issues and her past association with globalist organizations are cause for concern among some conservatives.

bard's record improves. In December 2020, she voted against the NDAA for fiscal 2021, which authorized $740 billion in military spending and undercut the president's legitimate authority as commander in chief by restricting his ability to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, Germany, and South Korea. Then-president Trump vetoed the measure, but was overridden by the House. In March 2020, she voted for the Iran War Powers Senate Resolution, which directed the president to terminate the use of U.S. armed forces against Iran or any part of its government or military unless Congress declared war or produced specific statutory authorization. She also voted to remove U.S. armed forces from Yemen.

Gabbard voted against renewal of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 2018, and introduced legislation in 2020 to repeal Section 702 of the act, which allows surveillance of Americans who are not charged with any crimes. Last month, though, she seemingly reversed her position and came out in support of Section 702, calling it a "vital national security tool," perhaps to assuage concerns among Senate Republicans in order to garner enough votes to get confirmed. She claimed that "significant FISA reforms have been enacted" since her time in Congress, and promised to "uphold Americans' Fourth Amendment rights."

To help run the intelligence agencies, Trump nominated John Ratcliffe, a former representative from Texas and director of national intelligence from 2020 to 2021, to be director of the CIA. During his half-decade in Congress, Ratcliffe accrued a Freedom Index score of 69 percent. Like Gabbard, he voted against FISA; but unlike her, he didn't vote against U.S. military intervention in Yemen.

Ratcliffe stood with Trump during the "Russian Collusion" hoax. He said it "appeared that there were crimes committed during the Obama administration" and that he saw "no evidence" that Russian interference in the election helped Trump win. He described court-appointed surveillance of the Trump campaign as spying, and said the "Russian Collusion" probe was tainted by a criminal conspiracy.

Ratcliffe was also a member of Trump's impeachment advisory team. He called the impeachment charade, triggered by Trump's call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, "the thinnest, fastest and weakest impeachment our country has ever seen."

Ratcliffe believes America's biggest threat is China. Writing in a December 2020 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, he said, "The intelligence is clear: Beijing intends to dominate the U.S. and the rest of the planet economically, militarily and technologically. Many of China's major public initiatives and prominent companies offer only a layer of camouflage to the activities of the Chinese Communist Party."

Kash Patel

If confirmed as director of the FBI, Kash Patel will face the unenviable task of reforming a thoroughly corrupt and morally bankrupt agency within the U.S. government. Moreover, he would lead an organization that has even spied on him.

Some patriots argue it would be better to abolish the FBI altogether, but until that happens, putting Patel in charge will have to do. Former Trump National Security Advisor Robert C. O'Brien said Patel is "one of the most experienced people ever to be nominated for FBI director." Patel is a former federal prosecutor at the Department of Justice. He served as chief of staff to acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Christopher C. Miller, and senior advisor to acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell, both during Trump's first term. He also led the interagency team that took down ISIS.

Patel worked as a staff member for the House Intelligence Committee during Trump's first term, when he exposed illegal surveillance activities by the FBI. He was the main author of the committee's memo detailing FBI and DOJ abuses of the FISA process in obtaining a surveillance warrant of Trump campaign staffer Carter Page. He exposed within the DOJ a desire to conceal from Congress the fact that the FBI had a spy in the Trump campaign in 2016, and played a key role in the investigation that uncovered the name of the FBI/DOJ spy.

Patel has said that he'll focus on fighting crime rather than surveilling Americans, and has promised to "clean house" at the Hoover Building and hold accountable all those who "abused their power" during the Russiagate "witch hunt."

Pam Bondi

If allegations of sexual deviancy against former Representative Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) didn't crop up, it's likely this section would bear his name. Trump's first choice to lead the Department of Justice fell through after threats to publish a dam-

AP Images

MAGA justice? Pam Bondi, Trump's pick to head the Department of Justice, is a strong Trump ally who built a tough reputation as Florida attorney general. She has promised to root out the corruption in the DOJ.

aging ethics report prompted the firebrand to withdraw his name from consideration. The House Ethics Committee eventually voted to make the report public anyway, likely to keep Gaetz away from the levers of power permanently. He has compiled a long and entertaining highlight reel of him embarrassing Biden administration officials, so it's no surprise he's not welcome in the Swamp.

Trump's second choice for attorney general (unless he was playing 4-D chess, as some believe) is Pam Bondi, Florida's attorney general from 2011 to 2019, a Trump ally, a D.C. lobbyist, and, as the media like to point out, an "election denier."

Bondi served as a member of Trump's White House legal team during his 2020 impeachment. During her time as Florida AG, she was integral to tackling human trafficking in the Sunshine State. She was a leader in the crusade to bring down ObamaCare; she fought to maintain Florida's ban on same-sex marriage; and she made central to her agenda combating "pill mills," facilities where doctors recklessly prescribe pain medications.

Over the past six years, Bondi has worked as a Washington lobbyist for one of the top firms in the country, Ballard Partners, representing corporate giants Amazon and Uber, among others. Ballard reportedly also has ties to Trump and incoming chief of staff Susie Wiles.

Some believe that as AG Bondi will order more John Durham-style special-counsel investigations. As special counsel, Durham released a report in May 2023 concluding that the FBI rushed into the "Russian Collusion" investigation without adequate evidence and ignored evidence undercutting the premise that Russia helped Trump get elected in 2015. Bondi's rhetoric reinforces this. She said in a TV appearance in August 2023, "The Department of Justice, the prosecutors will be prosecuted — the bad ones. The investigators will be investigated. Because the Deep State, last term for President Trump, they were hiding in the shadows. But now they have a spotlight on them, and they can all be investigated."

Pete Hegseth

Pete Hegseth is a former Army National Guard officer who served tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan and earned two Bronze Stars as a result. He's a Princeton University graduate and a political commentator for Fox News. He may soon add U.S. secretary of defense to his résumé, assuming he can overcome the torrent of Swamp opposition in the Senate.

After Trump announced Hegseth's nomination, CNN dug up a seven-year-old police report filed in a Monterey, California, court in which the prospective defense secretary is accused of sexual assault. According to the report via CNN, a California woman told police that Hegseth "physically blocked her from leaving a hotel room, took her phone, and then sexually assaulted her even though she 'remembered saying "no" a lot.'" Hegseth was never charged with a crime, but his attorney acknowledged that a settlement with his accuser that included a secret payout and a confidentiality clause was reached.

Perhaps Hegseth's greatest sin, according to detractors, is his common sense. He has railed against "woke" leadership in the U.S. military. He told veteran podcaster Shawn Ryan that "the dumbest phrase on planet earth in the military is 'our diversity is our strength.'" Moreover, he told Ryan, "We should not have women in combat roles. It hasn't made us more effective, hasn't made us more lethal, [but it] has made fighting more complicated." By opening combat positions to women, Hegseth believes, we've lowered standards and "the capability of that unit."

Hegseth has also had the gall to question NATO. In his book *The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free*, he criticizes NATO members for not spending enough on their own defense and refers to them as "self-righteous and impotent nations asking us to honor outdated and one-sided defense arrangements they no longer live up to."

He also advocates for the implementation of a 10-year ban on generals working for defense contractors after retiring from the military. If the Senate confirms him, not only might the Defense Department deep-six wokeness in the military, but the department could be renamed. Hegseth has suggested a reversal to its original moniker, the War Department.

Kristi Noem & Mike Waltz

Given Alejandro Mayorkas' disastrous, possibly treasonous, tenure as Department of Homeland Security head, it was nearly impossible for Trump to appoint someone worse. He nominated South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, considered a conservative stalwart by most Americans. The appointee

AP Images

No more woke: Trump's nominee for defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, wants to end the military's push for LGBT nonsense and remove women from combat roles. For this, he has earned the ire of the Left.

will be pivotal in carrying out Trump's immigration plans, in addition to the agency's duties surrounding cybersecurity, anti-terrorism, and emergency response.

During the peak of the border invasion, Noem was in the chorus of vocal opposition to such insane policies. She also led her state during the peak of Covid mania in a manner that made it one of the most desirable places to visit. Along with Florida, South Dakota was known for being a free state where people could party and buy groceries like it was 2019.

But within the Mount Rushmore State, Noem has made some enemies. A couple years ago, carbon-capture pipeline companies arrived there to install their ludicrous underground contraptions throughout the state. As far as many of her constituents are concerned, carbon-capture pipelines are nothing more than a money-making scam that violates basic property rights and destroys perfectly fine farmland. South Dakotans have fought back against the pipeline company Summit Carbon Solutions for carrying out surveys of farmers' land without their permission and bullying landowners to sign easement agreements. And Noem, as far as they're concerned, has done nothing to help fend off the pipeline companies. Many of her constituents believe she doesn't have the dedication to individual liberty she claims to.

As for national security advisor, Trump appointed Representative Mike Waltz (R-Fla.), a war hawk "fully aligned with the worst prongs of bipartisan DC consensus," according to an assessment from independent journalist Glenn Greenwald.

Waltz is a former Army Green Beret who, as a legislator, has harshly criticized China and urged NATO members to pay more for defense, and expects Trump to push Ukraine and Russia toward a negotiated end to the war in Ukraine.

He has served two terms in Congress, and accrued an underwhelming 67-percent cumulative score in *TNA's* Freedom Index. Waltz has voted to reauthorize warrantless spying on Americans via FISA, to dole out piles of cash to Ukraine in its inevitable loss to Russia, and against pulling U.S. troops out of Syria.

Doug Burgum

Trump nominated as his interior secretary a man who, as governor of North Dakota, set a goal in 2021 for the state to reach net-zero emissions by 2030. Doug Burgum believes in man-made climate change. But his plan to meet the net-zero carbon target doesn't include abolishing fossil fuels. Instead, he sees carbon-capture pipelines as the way to reduce or offset fossil-fuel emissions.

If the cries of the environmentalists are a true gauge, Burgum might do some good as secretary of the interior. According to Kierán Suckling, executive director at the Center for Biological Diversity, "Burgum will be a disastrous Secretary of the Interior who'll sacrifice our public lands and endangered wildlife on the altar of the fossil fuel industry's profits."

Burgum, if confirmed, will head the department that oversees hundreds of millions of acres of federal land and other natural resources the incoming Trump administration needs to boost domestic oil and gas production.

Scott Bessent & Howard Lutnick

When Trump announced he was nominating former George Soros employee Scott Bessent for treasury secretary, Elon Musk dubbed it a "business-as-usual choice." However, none other than the most RINO of RINOs, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), called it an "outstanding" choice. That, in a nutshell, may be all we need to know about this pick. Nevertheless, we'll be a little more thorough.

Bessent is a homosexual and a CFR member. He worked as Soros' top money manager, his chief investment officer, from 2011 to 2015. He joined Soros Fund Management in 1991, and is credited as being one of the driving forces behind the firm's bet that the British pound would collapse. Other versions of the story say Soros essentially "broke the Bank of England" by shorting the pound. Those who favor Bessent, including Wall Street, see him as a stabilizing force who understands markets and will preserve the status quo.

Bessent, if his rhetoric is genuine, has some redeeming ideas. He has called for rolling back government subsidies, deregulating the economy, and raising domestic energy production. He also favors one of Trump's economic weapons, tariffs. Moreover, Bessent is a cryptocurrency enthusiast — at least, again, in rhetoric. He said in an interview with Fox Business in July, "I have been excited about [Trump's] embrace of crypto and I think it fits very well with the Republican Party, the ethos of it. Crypto is about freedom and the crypto economy is here to stay. Crypto

is bringing in young people, people who have not participated in markets."

Speaking of crypto, Trump's pick for commerce secretary — Howard Lutnick, the man Musk preferred for treasury secretary over Bessent — is a proponent of Tether.

Lutnick is the billionaire CEO of Cantor Fitzgerald, the international financial services firm. According to investigative journalist Whitney Webb, Cantor Fitzgerald and its subsidiaries "are multinational in scope, promote the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (which have major implications for debt politics and economic activity), and are even directly partnered with foreign state-owned firms that recently came under scrutiny following the release of the contents of the laptop of ... Hunter Biden."

The Commerce Department has become a major weapon against China's tech sector. It has authority over export controls on sensitive U.S. technologies, and investigates anti-dumping and anti-subsidy cases that can result in tariffs. Lutnick, like his future boss, is a big fan of tariffs. "Tariffs are an amazing tool [for] the president to use," he said in an October appearance on CNBC, adding that the incoming Trump administration should use tariffs to bolster American industry. "If we want to make it in America," he said, "tariff it, or if we're competing with it, tariff it."

Lutnick has also floated the idea of ending the federal income tax, echoing similar teasers from Trump. Abolishing the federal income tax would allow hardworking Americans to keep more of their money while impeding the government from redistributing it to other countries and through welfare schemes.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, and Dr. Marty Makary

This is the state of American health according to Robert F. Kennedy, Jr:

> Americans have fallen an average of six years in life expectancy compared to Europeans; 74 percent of Americans are overweight or obese, including 50 percent of children; America's health crisis is so severe that 77 percent of otherwise eligible men and women can't serve in the military; about 18 percent of American teens have fatty liver disease, something that used to only affect late-stage cancer patients; young adult cancers are up 79 percent; one in four American women are on antidepressants; 15 percent of high-school students are on Adderall; and half a million American children are on antidepressants. No other country has this.

Kennedy has made such remarks to multiple audiences. Trump's own comments indicate that he believes there's something to what Kennedy is saying, and he nominated RFK, who also ran for president in 2024, for health and human services secretary. RFK's publicly stated goal as HHS secretary is to curb chronic illnesses and crack down on ultra-processed foods. But his antagonistic views of vaccines in general have many on Capitol Hill worried that he'll finish the job of undermining *all* vaccines.

Unlike the neocons vying for positions in the Trump administration, Kennedy has never even pretended to be a true conservative. He still believes in abortion, affirmative action, and man-made climate change. But he's been tasked with getting America healthy again, and, according to Trump, "Bobby" isn't going anywhere near the oil.

If all pans out in the confirmation process, RFK, Jr. will have a kindred spirit over at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which he would oversee. Trump has nominated Dr. Jay Bhattacharya for NIH director.

In March 2020, just as Covid hysteria was ratcheting up, Bhattacharya had the temerity to ask, "Is the Coronavirus as Deadly as They Say?" He argued in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that Covid lockdowns and quarantines were not based on scientific data. Former NIH Director Francis Collins has publicly attacked Bhattacharya as a "fringe epidemiologist," but Bhattacharya may soon occupy Collins' former chair.

Bhattacharya works as a professor of medicine at Stanford University. He was one of the authors of "The Great Barrington Declaration," which called for "focused protection" of vulnerable people, freedom for everyone else, and an evidence-based approach to tackling

AP Images

Mixed record: South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem gained popularity for her hands-off approach to Covid. She has angered some people, however, by not fighting carbon-capture pipelines that threaten the property rights of landowners in her state.

Covid, as opposed to the one-size-fits-all lockdowns that the United States and many other countries leveled against their citizens.

Former White House health advisor to the Trump administration Katy Talento told *The Epoch Times* that she expects Bhattacharya to "reform the funding process to ensure that priorities for research grant approvals are driven by uncovering the root causes of the chronic disease epidemic in the United States rather than symptom mitigation medications." Kennedy has said that he would direct the NIH to fund research that investigates the cause of America's chronic health crisis.

Dr. Marty Makary, another Covid critic, albeit a timid one, has been tapped to head the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Makary is on the executive board of a telehealth company called Sesame.

Unlike RFK and Bhattacharya, Makary supported lockdowns and masking during the Covid era — until he didn't. He said in September 2020 that America should have introduced early shutdowns and universal masking policies to control the spread, but later criticized those policies because of the obvious economic and social harms they were wreaking. He also had a problem with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention inflating the numbers of Covid deaths and the government's forced vaccination attempts, though he did not oppose the vaccines themselves.

When it comes to America's food system, there's no daylight between Makary and Kennedy. Speaking at a congressional roundtable discussion hosted by Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Makary said, "We have poisoned our food supply, engineered highly addictive chemicals that we put into our food." He blames chemicals for damaging gut bacteria and gut lining, which leads to chronic inflammation that drives the chronic disease epidemic raging through the bodies of Americans from coast to coast.

A spokesman for the Trump transition team told *The New York Times* that Trump's Cabinet picks will "slash wasteful spending in our broken health care system that cripples our nation's budget" and "return health care to the Gold Standard." Of course, as many readers of *The New American* know,

AP Images

Make America healthy: While RFK, Jr.'s desire to "Make America Healthy Again" is noble, the federal government should not be involved in healthcare. Kennedy should start by working to abolish all federal healthcare agencies, particularly the FDA.

government involvement in healthcare is unconstitutional, but any spending cuts are a welcome step in the right direction.

What Now?

These appointments and nominations offer a glimpse into the second Trump presidency. For many, MAGA purists specifically, Trump could have and should have done better. And while that's obviously true, it's also true that no matter how great a Cabinet Trump assembles, no matter how many red-pilled anti-globalists occupy the offices of the West Wing over the next four years, it doesn't absolve the electorate of its responsibility in the American self-government process.

Yes, leadership matters, but the United States of America is a constitutional Republic, wherein the people choose their leaders, and by extension, the policies they want implemented within the restraints of the Constitution. Though efforts to undermine the people by corrupting that process exist, and in many instances have even succeeded, Trump's rise and victory show that the people still hold more power than the elites and Deep State.

But the work has just begun. Now is the time for patriots to push harder, not lay off the pedal. Americans need to increase their political involvement and ratchet up pressure to implement policies that foster true liberty and prosperity. And they need to do so with a foundation of understanding that will truly make America great again.

For those who want to get involved, we recommend our parent organization, The John Birch Society. The JBS has chapters nationwide and a massive archive of research and educational resources. With 66 years of experience in activism and education, and nearly as much experience in fending off smears and unfounded lies, no organization has stood the test of time and withstood attacks like the JBS.

You can contact your local coordinator at https://jbs.org/coordinator/ to get plugged into a chapter near you. Let's make America greater than it ever was! ■

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AMERICA NEEDS A CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, NOT AN "EFFICIENT" ONE

Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy want to make government more "efficient." But unconstitutional programs should be eliminated, not made more efficient.

Elon Musk

AP Images

Vivek Ramaswamy

AP Images

by Paul Dragu

At the time of this writing, the national debt of the United States had hit an incomprehensible $36,300,597,047,646. By the time you read these words, it'll be higher. Much higher. The government has been adding billions of dollars of debt every day.

The debt is rising at a stupidly fast and dangerous pace. On December 4, 2024, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell warned that the country is on an "unsustainable" fiscal path and called for a course correction, just days after the debt topped $36 trillion for the first time.

The Treasury Department includes on its website a graph that illustrates how much the debt has risen over the past 100 years (see graphic on page 20). In 1924, the national debt hit $394 billion. Spending rose significantly around the World War II era, and began plateauing around 1950. In 1982, spending again began rising significantly, pausing for just a moment around the 2011 mark, before it rose and rose until the concerning uphill trend turned into the unscalable cliff we are facing today.

The top three spending categories are Social Security, Medicare, and national defense, according to treasury.gov. They make up half the budget. Only the latter category existed before 1930. The federal government has exploded in size over the last 100 years. In addition to the emergence of the welfare state, agencies including the departments of Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and many others have been created. About three million federal employees — more than the populations of Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska combined — run this bureaucratic behemoth.

Ridiculous, Wasteful Spending

On January 2, news broke that the Department of Justice spent more than $100 million between 2021 and 2024 on proposals promoting woke content in classrooms, including anti-white racism and perverse sexual ideologies. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported issuing an $850,000 federal grant to "Centerstone's LGBTQI+ Family Support Program" to provide training for military families to "affirm the gender identity" of their children.

It gets worse. House Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) Caucus Co-chair Aaron Bean (R-Fla.) revealed to the *Daily Mail* some ridiculously egregious government waste projects that federal workers approved. They include a $2.3 million National Institutes of Health study to test cocaine use in beagles, $6.9 million to study "smart toilets" that recognize the user's "anal print," $118,000 to study if a metal replica robot of Marvel Comics' Thanos could really snap his fingers, and $75,000 in grants for a Harvard study on lizards being blown off trees with leaf blowers.

Accountability is another problem. The government lost about $200 billion in Covid "pandemic" relief money to fraud and abuse. And in November 2024, the Pentagon failed its seventh audit in a row, "with the nation's largest government agency still unable to fully account for its more than $824 billion budget," *The Hill* reported. Over the years, the Pentagon has been unable to account for nearly $2 trillion. Stunningly, a spokesperson said after the latest failed audit that the massive agency plans to pass an audit in 2028.

Enter DOGE

Donald Trump's administration is tasking the Department of Government Efficiency — an unofficial government agency — to tackle spending at the behest of the richest

man in the world, Elon Musk. The Tesla magnate and his fellow entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy will be the lead nongovernmental advisors for the department. Trump said the goal of DOGE will be to "provide advice and guidance from outside of government" and partner with the White House Office of Management and Budget to drive large-scale structural reform.

Musk said during Trump's Madison Square Garden rally before Election Day 2024 that he wants to cut at least $2 trillion in federal spending. Ramaswamy has said that entire agencies will be "deleted" under DOGE's recommendations, driving mainstream-media lemmings into a tizzy.

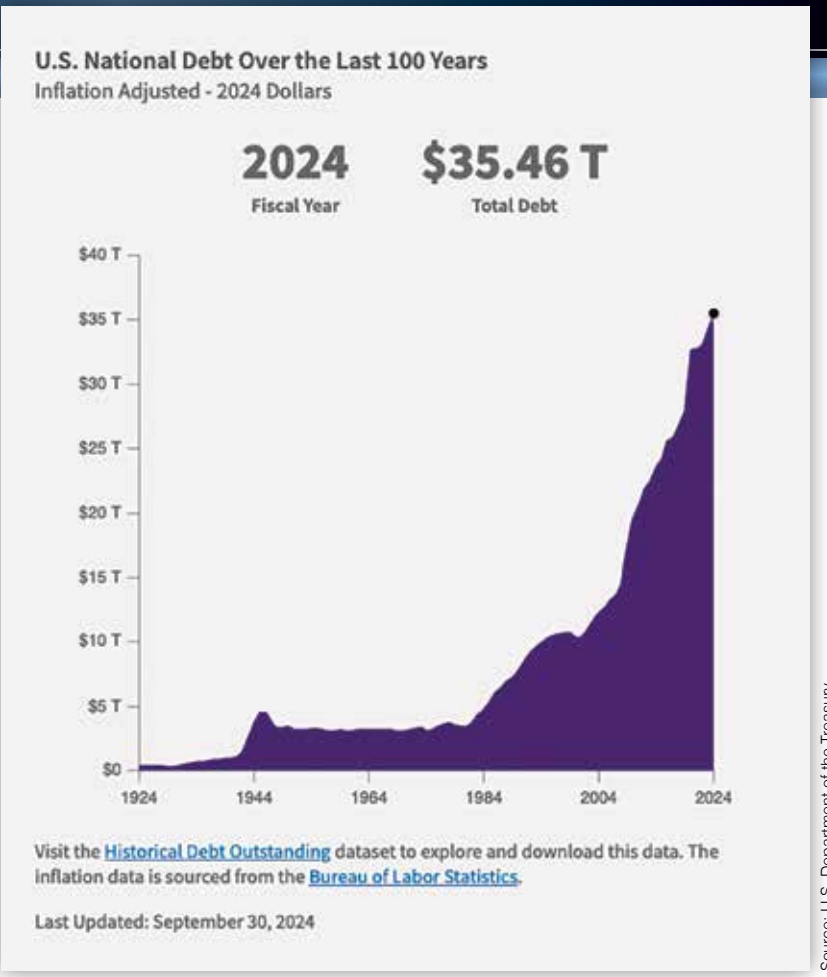
While Musk has not said he plans on cutting Medicare and Social Security, there are indications that he's open to reducing defense spending and a number of blatantly ridiculous expenses, of which there is no shortage.

Ramaswamy has hinted that the Department of Education may be in the crosshairs for elimination. "The Department of Education just failed to receive a clean audit for its 3rd time in a row (budget: $268B)," he posted on X November 19, 2024. This isn't the first time incoming administrations have targeted the unconstitutional department. Ronald Reagan also promised to eliminate it.

DOGE may also target expired programs taxpayers are still paying for. According to a DOGE post on X, "In FY2024, U.S. Congress provided $516 billion to programs whose authorizations previously expired under federal law. Nearly $320 billion of that $516 billion expired more [than] a decade ago."

Another area of possible waste reduction is federal employment. Musk and Ramaswamy have vowed to end telework for tens of thousands of federal employees. On November 23, Ramaswamy posted, "Most federal workers don't physically show up, yet the cost of maintaining & providing energy for govt office buildings is $15BN/year (not counting billions more spent on office furnishings). The government owns 7,967 vacant buildings. This is nuts. Sounds like a job for DOGE."

By requiring government employees to report to the office, the idea is that many will quit since they can't work from home anymore. But this won't be so easy. Early in December, Joe Biden struck a deal with the American Federation of Government Employees that allowed the extension of telework for some 42,000 Social Security Administration workers until October 25, 2029. This exemplifies the type of resistance DOGE and its congressional supporters will encounter in their mission to cut spending.



Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury

The D.C. Swamp has obviously shown no desire to reduce spending. Democrats and Republicans alike have spent like drunken sailors. Just over the last four years, Congress has drafted multiple massive spending bills, hundreds and sometimes thousands of pages long, with funding for a hodgepodge of programs mixed together in a toxic spending soup with plenty of pork thrown in. Then they've presented the spending packages without any time for legislators to read them, the goal being to cram them through without scrutiny. It's a very stupid way for a nation to operate.

Just Follow the Constitution

While Musk, Ramaswamy, and everyone else who's serious about saving the nation from financial ruin may have the right intentions, the simplest way to pull the nation back from the approaching fiscal cliff is to eliminate unconstitutional spending. The parent company of this magazine, The John Birch Society, has for years maintained that more than 80 percent of the federal government is unconstitutional. America's foundational governing documents do not permit a federal health bureaucracy or an energy agency. There is certainly nothing in the Constitution about the federal government intruding in education or the environment, either. There's nothing in the Constitution allowing federal police agencies such as the FBI or ATF. On and on we could go, but you get the point.

Americans also need to push for the elimination of the federal income tax and the restoration of sound money. When the government can't loot the paychecks of hardworking Americans, it'll be forced to shut down entire agencies. And when fiat money is abolished and replaced with precious metals, that'll put an end to the endless printing that mounts as debt.

In short, the best way to reduce spending is to get back to the U.S. Constitution. ■

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by Arthur R. Thompson

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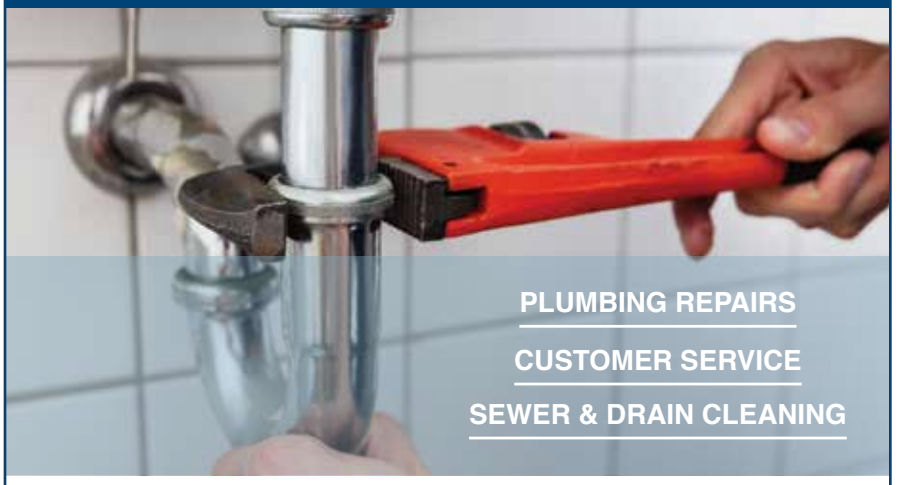

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STRINGS ATTACHED

Federal Takeover of Local Police Via Grants

As federal funding for local law enforcement increases, so does federal control. Americans must stand up to this stealth assault on freedom — before it's too late.

by Peter Rykowski

Local police departments across the United States face a wide range of opposition. Most apparent is from the criminals they seek to deter and bring to justice — police officers not only devote much of their time to stopping such individuals, but risk their lives to do so. Police departments also face opposition from certain segments of society and government institutions. For example, the Defund the Police movement has led to multiple big-city departments facing budget cuts and low morale. Meanwhile, local prosecutors and judges across the country have ignored the law and released criminals onto the streets — threatening the safety of police officers and civilians alike.

However, another threat exists — one often overlooked. Although it's not at the forefront of people's minds, it is just as dangerous in the long run as the others, if not more so. This threat is the federal government, specifically its increasing strangulation of, and control over, local police departments through grants and other programs. If not stopped, it will extinguish local control and decimate protection of our God-given, individual rights.

The federal assault on local police can be stopped — but it requires education and action on the part of citizens. In addition to informing themselves and others about the proper scope of government under the U.S. Constitution, concerned Americans must actively pressure their elected officials to govern in accordance with the founding document. By understanding the problem and taking action to promote the solution, we can protect our local police and God-given rights.

Losing Independence

The federal government's tightening stranglehold on local police did not happen overnight. It has taken decades to get to where we are now. Although it now seems normal — even expected — for the federal government to provide funding for local police departments and other state and local agencies, this scheme is alien to the U.S. Constitution.

The Founding Fathers designed a federal government with limited powers, and intended for the states to retain the vast majority of power. In *The Federalist*, No. 45, James Madison noted that, under the Constitution, the federal government's powers are "few

Peter Rykowski is a research associate for The John Birch Society, managing JBS's legislative alerts, and is editor of the JBS Bulletin.

and defined," while the states' are "numerous and indefinite." Furthermore, the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution unequivocally declares, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

What powers are delegated to the federal government? The answer resides in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution. It begins by declaring, "The Congress shall have Power," and then lists 17 specific areas in which Congress has authority to legislate. The section ends by stating that Congress may "make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper *for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers*." (Emphasis added.) Law enforcement is not among those enumerated powers. Congress' powers — and, by extension, the federal government's powers — are limited, and the Founding Fathers left no question of this.

Library of Congress

Following the Constitution: The federal government's powers are limited to only those specifically enumerated in the U.S. Constitution. Federal officials before 1900 largely respected these limitations, as exemplified by President Franklin Pierce's 1854 veto of a federal land-grants bill.

For decades after the Constitution's ratification, the federal government largely — though with exceptions — respected its constitutional limitations. According to a 2019 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, "The prevailing view in Congress [before 1860] was that any power not explicitly provided to Congress in the Constitution was excluded purposively, suggesting that in the absence of specific, supporting constitutional language the exercise of governmental police powers (the regulation of private interests for the protection of public safety, health, and morals; the prevention of fraud and oppression; and the promotion of the general welfare) was either meant to be a state or local government responsibility, or outside the scope of governmental authority altogether." For this reason, federal grants to state and local governments were virtually nonexistent before the late 19th century.

Even in the rare instances when Congress passed legislation authorizing federal grants, it met strong opposition based on constitutional principles. As an example, the CRS report cites an instance in 1854, when Congress sent a land-grants bill to President Franklin Pierce. Pierce vetoed the bill, and declared in his veto message:

> I cannot find any authority in the Constitution making the federal government the great almoner of public charity throughout the United States. To do so would, in my judgment, be contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, and subversive of the whole theory upon which the union of these States is founded…. I respectfully submit that, in a constitutional point of view, it is wholly immaterial whether the appropriation be in money, or in land…. Should this bill become a law … the several States instead of bestowing their own means on the social wants of their own people, may themselves … become humble supplicants for the bounty of the Federal Government, reversing the state's true relation to this Union.

Similarly, President Grover Cleveland based his 1887 veto of the Texas Seed Bill, which would have appropriated federal funds to purchase seed grain for farmers in Texas after a drought, on constitutional principles. In his veto message, he noted, "I can find no warrant for such an appropriation in the Constitution." Cleveland further wrote that such proposals should "be steadfastly resisted," and that "federal aid … encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character."

Even by 1902, after the trickle of federal grants had already started, only five grants existed. Combined, they comprised less than one percent of total state and local revenue. However, a series of big-government programs and structural changes — including the 16th Amendment, the New Deal, and the Great Society — caused the number and scope of grants to balloon. According to the CRS report, 1,274 federal grants existed by 2018, and according to a 2023 report by the National Association of State Budget Officers, 35.3 percent of state expenditures came from the federal government. This funding covers a wide range of subjects, from housing to the environment, that the federal government has no constitutional authority over. Local law enforcement has not been spared by this growth in federal interference.

Federal Grants

Federal funding of law enforcement began in the 1930s following President Herbert Hoover's Wickersham Commission, which issued two reports criticizing the effectiveness of local police. This funding expanded and became entrenched in the 1960s with the passage of the Law Enforcement Assistance Act of 1965 and the

Federal control: Multiple federal agencies administer dozens of grants and programs for local law-enforcement agencies. Although often viewed as beneficial for underfunded police departments, federal grants and other programs erode the independence of local law enforcement.

Joel Carillet/Getty Images

Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. The new federal grants were initially administered by the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance from 1965 to 1968, and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration from 1968 to 1982. Today, dozens of federal law-enforcement grants and programs exist, far more than this article can cover. Nonetheless, it's important to highlight the key agencies involved in the federal stealth assault on local and independent police.

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), is one such agency. Created in 1984 out of a reorganization of DOJ agencies, the OJP describes itself as "the largest grantmaking component of the Department of Justice." The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), a subagency of the OJP, administers many of these grants. The largest such grant is the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG), which the BJA describes as "the leading source of federal justice funding to state and local jurisdictions." The JAG funds various law-enforcement activities, corrections, criminal-prosecution activities, the "implementation of state crisis intervention courts," and more. The BJA specifies "areas of emphasis" that it encourages (but doesn't require) JAG recipients to prioritize, including through "coordination with federal law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders." In fiscal 2023, these areas included "Advancing Justice System Reform Efforts," "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities," and "Preventing and Combating Hate Crimes." According to the BJA, since fiscal 2005, the JAG has provided more than $7.6 billion in grants to state and local governments.

Other BJA grant programs include the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Program, which encourages states and localities to "investigat[e] and prosecut[e]" so-called hate crimes, a subjective category that effectively creates favored classes of citizens in criminal prosecutions. Other OJP/BJA grants promote the purchase and implementation of body-worn cameras and bulletproof vests by law-enforcement agencies, among other goals. As implied above, the BJA also administers funding to local prosecutors, provided they comply with certain federal requirements.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), created in 1994, is another DOJ agency heavily involved in funding local law enforcement. The agency boasts of having "appropriated more than $20 billion to help advance community policing" since its creation. Many COPS grants seek to influence local law-enforcement activities. For example, the Community Policing Development grant program entices police departments to implement practices such as de-escalation training, crisis intervention, and countering "hate crimes and domestic extremism." Additionally, the COPS Hiring Program inserts the federal government into local departments' hiring and retention of officers.

Multiple federal law-enforcement programs outside the OJP and COPS also exist. For example, the Defense Logistics Agency's (DLA) 1033 Program allows local law-enforcement agencies to receive surplus military equipment, and the 1122 Program, jointly administered by the DLA and the General Services Administration, allows them to "purchase equipment suitable for counter-drug, homeland security, and emergency response activities." These programs promote and enable the militarization of police departments, encouraging them to resemble the U.S. armed forces rather than local law enforcement.

Federal funding of local law-enforcement activities and equipment might sound positive — after all, what could be wrong with providing our police officers with additional resources to do their jobs? However, it threatens the independence of local police departments, promotes greater federal control, and — by extension — weakens the protection of Americans' God-given rights.

When local police receive large amounts of funding from external sources — in this case, the federal government — they become dependent on those sources, making them willing to follow the federal government's wishes and preferences in order to continue receiving the support. Additionally, federal funding always comes with strings attached. Local police departments must do something — such as adopt cer-

tain policies or practices — in exchange for that funding. Because of this, federal grants are a powerful tool to turn local police into federal agents.

Federal grants also undermine the principle of federalism — a key firewall protecting citizens from government infringements on their God-given rights. In *The Federalist*, No. 51, Madison noted that it is "necessary to control the abuses of government," and advocated robust checks and balances — both between the three branches of the federal government and between the federal and state governments. In fact, Madison noted that in America's federalist system, which divides power within and between the federal and state governments, "a double security arises to the rights of the people." By unconstitutionally meddling in and influencing a different level of government, federal funding compromises the principle of federalism and — by extension — protections of citizens' individual rights.

Police departments have become heavily reliant on federal grants. According to Andrea Edmiston, director of governmental affairs for the National Association of Police Organizations, in a July 2023 interview with *Roll Call*, "It's reached the point where state and local law enforcement agencies — a lot of them, right — rely on federal funding to make their budgets work." Such dependence on the federal government is not healthy, and is detrimental to federalism and the vertical separation of powers under the U.S. Constitution.

If not stopped, this will lead to the eventual federal takeover of local law-enforcement agencies, effectively creating a national police force. This is already underway, including in the form of Fusion Centers — state-run facilities used to strengthen information sharing between the federal government and states and localities. Currently, 80 such facilities exist, in every U.S. state and most territories. Although information sharing on a case-by-case basis — and as equal partners — is not inherently problematic, a formalized arrangement via fusion centers is a major step toward turning local law enforcement into mere agents of the federal government. States and localities must reject federal law-enforcement grants and integration schemes with federal agencies.

Looking Ahead

The political winds in Washington, D.C., have shifted significantly in recent months. In addition to Donald Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election, Republicans gained unified control over Congress for the first time in six years, taking over the U.S. Senate and holding the House. What implications will this have on federal meddling in local law enforcement?

In order to look ahead, it's helpful to examine the recent past. In September 2022, the U.S. House passed multiple bills that would have expanded federal grants to local law-enforcement agencies. Most prominently, it passed H.R. 6448, the Invest to Protect Act of 2022, by a 360-64 vote. If enacted, it would have expanded grants to police departments with fewer than 125 employees. Although the Senate separately passed a companion bill, H.R. 6448 ultimately didn't become law.

That same month, the House passed three other bills — the Break the Cycle of Violence Act (H.R. 4118), the Mental Health Justice Act of 2022 (H.R. 8542), and the VICTIM Act of 2022 (H.R. 5768) — that also would have expanded federal grants to local police departments. Despite passing by wide margins, they stalled in the Senate and did not become law.

However, in May 2024, Congress passed — and President Joe Biden signed into law — S. 546, the Recruit and Retain Act, which expanded how COPS grants may be used and awarded. The Senate passed S. 546 by unanimous consent, and only 18 U.S. representatives voted against the bill. Republican leadership in the 119th Congress, which began on January 3, shows no indication of reversing course on federal grants.

Additionally, the Left has attempted to weaponize federal police grants to coerce local law enforcement to adopt radical policies. Under the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, most recently introduced in 2024 as H.R. 8525 and S. 4991, police departments receiving OJP funding would be required to implement a training program to counter "racial profiling" and "implicit bias" and prohibit certain restraining tactics, such as chokeholds, among other radical policies. The Left will likely continue advocating similar legislation, even while in opposition. Regardless of political-party affiliation or control, Congress

Dominique A. Pineiro/Department of Defense

Big boss: Although Donald Trump has pledged to reverse soft-on-crime policies and take a tougher approach, his campaign statements indicate he will not rein in unconstitutional federal interference in local law enforcement.

Joel Carillet/Getty Images

Keep them independent: Locally controlled police are the bedrock of a free society. Citizens must inform their local officials — including police chiefs and sheriffs — about the dangers of accepting federal funding.

largely supports unconstitutional federal involvement in law enforcement.

Will President Trump reverse this federal encroachment into local law enforcement? Unfortunately, early indications are not promising. Among Trump's 2024 campaign promises listed in his "Agenda47" plan, he pledged to "sign a record investment in hiring, retention, and training for police officers." This would necessitate another expansion of federal grants. Other aspects of his campaign plan — although promising to implement conservative-leaning crime policies — would maintain existing federal involvement in local law enforcement, rather than a much-needed and constitutionally required reduction.

Accordingly, Trump and congressional Republicans — along with Democrats — appear set to maintain, if not increase, unconstitutional federal meddling in local police. To guide them away from this disastrous route, Americans must get involved.

Taking Action

What can we do to protect local police and roll back federal overreach? First, it is essential that we inform our local police departments, state and local elected officials, and fellow citizens about the dangers of federal grants and involvement in law enforcement — and the importance of following the U.S. Constitution and rejecting unconstitutional acts. Success will begin only when a sufficient proportion of the electorate understands America's founding principles. So, it's important to meet with elected officials and police chiefs, hold public educational events, and take all other possible actions to inform others about the importance of keeping local police independent from federal funding and influence. A recommended tool for informing others is the "Make America STATES Again" reprint (originally published in the October 14, 2024 issue of *The New American*), which explains the constitutional limitations of the federal government and gives specific recommendations for restoring adherence to America's founding principles.

State and local officials will likely respond by noting the difficulty — politically and operationally — of rejecting federal grants. This critique has merit, since state and local law enforcement have grown accustomed to and dependent on federal funding. However, inconvenience does not excuse our elected officials from following the U.S. Constitution, which they have sworn to uphold. And constitutionally, authority over law enforcement is "reserved to the States" per the 10th Amendment. Funding local police departments is a matter for the states, not the federal government. Achieving this will require a paradigm shift in thinking, including ending the expectation that the federal government should provide unconstitutional funding to states and localities, and ensuring that state governments adjust their spending priorities to align with America's founding principles.

Additionally, we must hold our local, state, and federal officials accountable. Are they voting for or supporting federal law-enforcement grants? Or are they advocating constitutional proposals to eliminate such grants, or state and local acceptance of them? Unfortunately, accepting federal funding is politically easy, and most elected officials oppose the notion of rejecting federal grants — despite their detrimental effects on state sovereignty and local control. Accordingly, voters must vigilantly pressure their officials to uphold constitutional principles and reject federal overreach.

To help citizens accomplish this, *The New American* publishes the Freedom Index and Congressional and Legislative Scorecards, which rate state and federal legislators based on their adherence to constitutional principles. This includes votes related to federal police grants, which blatantly violate the U.S. Constitution. The Freedom Index and Scorecards can be viewed and printed for free at TheFreedomIndex.org. Distribute them to inform others about their legislators' performance.

These and other actions require organization to be effective, and The John Birch Society, the parent organization of *The New American*, provides this. JBS members across the country work tirelessly — and in a concerted manner — to promote constitutional government and inform Americans about their country's founding principles, including limited government and local, independent police. By working together, we can restore adherence to the U.S. Constitution and prevent the creation of a national police force. Get started by visiting JBS.org. ■

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WORDS MATTER:
WHY WE CHANGED THE NAME OF THIS COLUMN

by Rebecca Terrell

"We can never win… unless the promise of what we can build supplies more motivation than the terror of what we must destroy." Robert Welch wrote these words in *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*. In order to bring Welch's "promise" to our pages, we launched a new column in December 2021 entitled "Faith, Family, Freedom." We wanted it to reflect a positive attitude in our mission to promote constitutional principles and preserve American ideals.

The column has covered topics such as the bravery of FBI whistleblowers, the tenacity of employees overcoming onerous vaccine mandates, and parents' victories over critical race theory taught in their children's schools. Each story focuses on the many successes American patriots have to show for their hard work and dedicated sacrifice. We hope these anecdotes inspire our readers to stay committed despite challenges.

The phrase "Faith, Family, Freedom" is not unique to our magazine, however. The catchy, contemporary expression is often heard in conservative circles. In 1997 the Hoover Institution published its "manifesto for cultural renewal" with three planks: "Family. Faith. Freedom." The Family Research Council even monetized the term, forming its Faith Family Freedom Fund super PAC to help get Republicans elected in 2024.

So, to differentiate our column, we've decided to change its title to the time-honored phrase "God, Family, Country," the concepts that Ezra Taft Benson, former president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, dubbed "Our Three Great Loyalties" in his 1974 book by that name.

Does this change amount to distinction without a difference? At first glance, "Faith, Family, Freedom" seems synonymous with "God, Family, Country." Yet there are important differences that account for our decision.

Faith vs. God

In writings foundational to Western civilization, the ancient philosopher Aristotle emphasized that "ends" (i.e., goals) are the reason for human actions, and that "means" are the tools we use to achieve them. "Faith" is not an end, but a means by which we reach God, or what Aristotle called the ultimate end — the goal desirable for its own sake. That is why faith only exists in this world, not in the afterlife. We no longer need it there. The same goes for hope. Of the theological virtues, charity alone remains throughout eternity, as Saint Paul explains in his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

Rebecca Terrell is a senior editor of The New American.

Moreover, faith *can* provide a pathway to God, but does it always? The word "faith" means different things to different people. The World Religion Database estimates that, counting all sects and denominations, there are more than 4,000 religions practiced across the globe. Does each lead to the true God (and therefore a properly ordered society), despite many contradictions among them?

A popular social-media meme answers this way: "Heaven has a tight border policy; hell has open borders." It's another way of saying, "Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat." (Matthew 7:13-14)

However, some hide behind "faith" to excuse all sorts of depravity. The Satanic Temple (TST), recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a religion, often invokes the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 against pro-life laws. TST classifies "the act of performing an abortion itself as a Satanic ritual — a rite of destruction that is *required* by the tenets of the belief system," explains Katherine Drabiak at Harvard Law's Bill of Health blog. (Emphasis in original.) TST also insists on erecting statues of the demon Baphomet on public property where the Ten Commandments or other religious symbols are displayed — the state capitols of Oklahoma (2012), Arkansas (2018), and Iowa (2023) have endured this mockery. Now, TST runs After School Satan Clubs operating in public school districts across the country.

Was this what our country's founders intended by religious freedom — unbridled license for anyone flying a faith banner? Or did they literally mean what they enacted into law in the First Amendment: to restrict *only Congress* from prohibiting religious practice and establishing a federal religion?

The answer to these questions is clear in countless examples of their writings, including the 1797 *Proclamation of a Day of Fast* made by Massachusetts Governor (and founding father) Samuel Adams, who prayed for "promoting and speedily bringing in the holy and happy period when the kingdoms of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and the people willingly bow to the sceptre of Him who is the Prince of Peace." Likewise, Robert Welch declared in 1958 that the worldwide battle Birchers are fighting is "between the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of anti-Christ for the souls and bodies of men."

Naysayers may point out that, like "faith," the word "God" can also mean many things. However, each religion has names for its particular deity/deities. Judaism employs several terms, including Yahweh, Elohim, Adonai, or Ha-Shem; Islam acknowledges Allah; Hinduism is pantheistic but refers to ultimate reality as Brahman; Buddhism reveres the Buddha but rejects the idea of an all-powerful creator; and the god of Sikhism is known by names such as Waheguru and Satnam. The capitalized term "God" is most associated with the triune Father, Son, and Holy Ghost of Christianity.

Freedom vs. Country

Much like faith, freedom is a means to an end. When used properly, the goal of freedom is the practice of virtue, which in turn is a means to the ultimate end — God. However, freedom itself is not a virtue; if misused, it leads quickly to vice.

"No child should be denied their freedom to be themselves," declares the American Civil Liberties Union regarding gender-mutilating treatments for minors. U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) introduced the "Freedom to Vote Act" to expand voter registration with same-day sign-up and to standardize mail-in ballots, even though these measures are proven to promote fraud. Similarly, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's (D-N.Y.) "Fairness to Freedom Act" proposed providing legal representation to illegal immigrants at government expense.

It is therefore easy to see how disparate the terms "freedom" and "country" can be from one another. Samuel Adams wrote that "if we would most truly enjoy this gift of Heaven [freedom], let us become a Virtuous people."

The term "country" better imparts his thinking, as the Latin for country, or "fatherland," is *patria*, which is the root of "patriotism." Saint Thomas Aquinas calls patriotism a duty necessary in the practice of piety, which falls under the cardinal virtue of Justice. "Wherefore just as it belongs to religion to give worship to God, so does it belong to piety, in the second place, to reverence one's parents and one's country" (*Summa Theologica* II-II.101.1).

Are "country" and "government" synonymous? Only insofar as the government does not become tyrannical. Aquinas explains that "there is no sedition in disturbing" a tyrant unless the citizenry would "suffer greater harm from the consequent disturbance."

So, we will continue publishing what we hope is an inspirational column in the pages of *The New American* magazine. We also hope its new but traditional title will lend stronger credence to its purpose. ■

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(February 10, 2025) TNA250210

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Wildfire Hero

The American Red Cross plays a vital role in providing relief and support to individuals and communities affected by disasters such as wildfires. Among the stories of heroism and compassion during these trying times is that of Jonny Constantine, a Malibu, California, resident who took extraordinary action to save his friends as wildfires threatened their home.

On a smoky December night in Malibu, the Franklin Fire rapidly spread across the hills, illuminating the landscape with an ominous red glow. Constantine noticed the fire nearing his friends' home and rushed to warn them. "I saw the lights were out, but the bell worked. I kept hitting the button and yelling from their gate to wake up," Constantine recounted. Smoke and embers filled the air as the fire crept closer. His persistence paid off: After nearly a half hour of trying to get his friends' attention, they finally woke up and escaped just in time. "I didn't leave until they were safe," he said.

Fortunately, a combination of rain, low temperatures, and minimal wind helped contain the Franklin Fire shortly after Constantine's evacuation efforts. State officials reported that the fire's activity had significantly decreased by mid-December, with only 13 structures destroyed — a stark contrast to the devastation of previous wildfires.

After ensuring his friends' safety, Constantine sought refuge at a Red Cross shelter in Pacific Palisades. There, he found a safe place to stay and a community of compassionate individuals ready to support him. "The Red Cross mobilized very quickly and was so compassionate to everyone's needs," Constantine shared. "The community came together, and I'm just so thankful for the Red Cross meeting my needs personally and helping me get through this difficult time. God bless all the people who made it possible."

Christmas Hope

A devastating house fire on Christmas Day turned into a powerful story of resilience and community support for a family in Chippewa County, Michigan. Thanks to the kindness of neighbors and strangers alike, the family has received more than $19,000 in donations to help them rebuild their lives.

The fire occurred on the afternoon of December 25, and by the time emergency responders arrived, the two-and-a-half-story wooden structure was fully engulfed in flames, according to a report from Mid-Michigan Now. Tragically, the Chippewa County Sheriff's Office later confirmed, the home was a total loss.

According to Breitbart, a woman named Christin McKerchie shared in a Facebook post that her daughter, Kayla, was the one who lost her house to the blaze.

Despite the heartbreak, the family — including Kayla and her children Estella, Jeremy, Everett, and baby Jasper — miraculously escaped unharmed. Even their two dogs made it out safely. "We are still in shock, processing everything, and are deeply grateful that everyone, including the dogs, are safe. It's truly a miracle," said McKerchie.

Volunteers from the Chippewa County Sheriff's Office Victim Services Unit were among the first to offer assistance. As news of the tragedy spread, community members rallied around the family. McKerchie organized a GoFundMe campaign to assist with their immediate needs and long-term recovery. Within days, the fundraiser surpassed $19,000 in donations. "We are beyond grateful for the outpouring of love and support from family, friends, and the community during this devastating time," McKerchie shared on the fundraising page.

Alongside financial contributions, many locals donated essential items to help the family navigate their sudden loss. McKerchie expressed her gratitude: "These little moments … remind us that joy still exists in the midst of it all."

The generosity of the Chippewa County community has given Kayla and her children a strong foundation as they begin the difficult process of rebuilding their lives.

TinyBrickOven

On December 1, 2024, a heartwarming story unfolded in Baltimore, Maryland, as a small pizza shop on the brink of closure received an extraordinary holiday gift. TinyBrickOven, a beloved local establishment, was saved from shutting its doors thanks to the generosity of Dave Portnoy, the founder of Barstool Sports. According to a report by Fox 45, Portnoy pledged an incredible $60,000 to keep the business afloat, offering hope and cheer during the festive season.

TinyBrickOven had faced growing challenges that seemed insurmountable. The shop's director of operations, Will Fagg, posted an emotional video earlier that month, announcing the shop's impending closure on Christmas Day and thanking loyal patrons for their support. "I thank you for everything. This is Will signing out from TinyBrickOven," he said, visibly shaken by the situation.

In an unexpected turn of events, Portnoy visited the shop during one of his famous pizza reviews. Video footage captured the moment Fagg met Portnoy, expressing his frustration over the difficulties the shop had encountered, including liquor licensing challenges that hampered business operations. Despite being served reheated pizza — a less-than-ideal situation — Portnoy was impressed, rating it 7.9 out of 10. "There's no way this place should be going out of business, none," he remarked.

After hearing about the shop's financial needs, Portnoy made the decision to donate $60,000 to the struggling eatery. Overwhelmed with emotion, Fagg responded, "Oh my gosh, man. This is unbelievable. I'm gonna cry, man, I'm gonna cry." He also shared that TinyBrickOven's neighbors were equally invested in the business' survival, emphasizing its importance to the community.

Beyond serving delicious pizza, TinyBrickOven is known for its pay-it-forward program, designed to assist those in need. An associated GoFundMe page explains, "Whether it's a struggling family, a hardworking nurse, or a neighbor facing tough times, your donation delivers more than a meal — it delivers hope, warmth, and the spirit of the season." The initiative reflects the shop's commitment to spreading joy and kindness, especially during the holidays. ■

— Raven Clabough

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JIMMY CARTER
Handmaiden of the Deep State

AP Images

Jimmy Carter was described as a humble peanut farmer who would not be beholden to the Deep State. While in office, though, he only furthered the Deep State's agenda.

by R. Cort Kirkwood

After his presidency, Jimmy Carter, who died on December 29 last year, built houses for the poor. That was a good thing. But he also spent considerable time violating the Logan Act, which forbids globe-trotting private citizens from acting as ad hoc diplomats. Carter was never charged with violating the 1799 statute, of course, but his machinations in the Middle East, notably in breaking bread with the Hamas terror outfit and sending a letter to Arab nations telling them not to join the 42-nation U.S. coalition to punish Iraq for invading Kuwait in 1990, were, arguably, treasonous.

"I don't know why [President George H.W.] Bush was so mad; I sent him a copy of the letter in advance," Carter said.

He apparently didn't know why Americans were mad after four years of his disastrous presidency, and likely didn't anticipate Ronald Reagan's 44-state shellacking in 1980.

Carter's failures were legion. The economy was a wreck, with sky-high interest rates and crushing inflation. He helped turn Nicaragua over to the communist Sandinistas and Rhodesia into a Marxist hellhole called Zimbabwe. He watched reliable ally Iran fall to Islamist revolutionaries who took 63 Americans hostage, and, worst of all, he gave away the Panama Canal with an illegitimate treaty, turning it into a seaborne highway for American enemies.

And, of course, he packed his administration with Deep State insiders from the Council on Foreign Relations and Trilateral Commission who helped him carry out those policies, which just happened to help America's communist enemies. This, despite the fact that he had warned on the campaign trail that "The insiders have had their chance and they have not delivered."

Trilateral Takeover

Before detailing the damage Carter did, it's worth recalling the career of one of the men instrumental in causing that dam-

R. Cort Kirkwood is a longtime contributor to The New American. *He was a newspaperman for more than 25 years.*

age: Zbigniew Brzezinski. His past before becoming Carter's national security advisor explains why Carter's foreign policy almost always harmed the United States.

As the late longtime president of The John Birch Society John F. McManus wrote in his book *The Insiders*, Carter campaign whiz and later White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan vowed a few weeks before Carter's election to the presidency in 1976, "If, after the inauguration, you find a Cy Vance as Secretary of State and Zbigniew Brzezinski as head of National Security, then I would say we failed. And I would quit. You're going to see new faces and new ideas."

However, as McManus pointed out, "After the election, Mr. Carter promptly named Cyrus Vance Secretary of State and Zbigniew Brzezinski to be the head of National Security, exactly what Mr. Jordan had said would never happen." McManus continued:

> But the real question is: What is it about Mr. Vance and Mr. Brzezinski that prompted Jordan to make such a statement? And the answer is that these two men are pillars of the very Establishment that candidate Carter so often attacked.

When Jimmy Carter appointed him to be Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance was a Wall Street lawyer, the Chairman of the Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, and a veteran of service in the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations.

Zbigniew Brzezinski had taught at Harvard and Columbia Universities, served in the State Department during the Johnson administration, and authored numerous books and articles for various Establishment publishers and periodicals.

But, beyond all of these Establishment credentials, at the time of their appointment by Jimmy Carter, both Vance and Brzezinski were members of the board of directors of a little-known organization called the Council on Foreign Relations. Also, each was a member of the very exclusive Trilateral Commission. Most Americans have never heard of these two organizations.

Jordan didn't quit, perhaps because by taking the top administration job at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue he could keep an eye on the men Carter appointed to the most powerful positions in the government.

AP Images

Deep Stater: Though Carter campaign chief and future White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan vowed that Deep Staters wouldn't serve in a Carter administration, the 39th president quickly picked Rockefeller men for two top jobs: Cyrus Vance (on Carter's right) became secretary of state, and Trilateral Commission co-founder Zbigniew Brzezinski (to Carter's left) became national security advisor.

And, of course, no young man in his right mind would turn down the top job in Washington. The White House chief of staff wields more power than the vice president.

Yet, whatever the reason Jordan stayed, one wonders whether he knew exactly what Carter had unleashed when he chose Brzezinski. He handed virtual control of U.S. foreign policy to one of globalist CFR-Trilateral man David Rockefeller's torpedoes.

Indeed, Brzezinski's book *Between Two Ages* was the Trilaterals' blueprint, McManus explained, and betrayed the Polish-born academic's plans for surrendering American sovereignty and incorporating the United States into a world government.

Among the sentiments the Trilateral founder/director and former Columbia University professor expressed were these:

- "Marxism is simultaneously a victory of the external, active man over the inner, passive man and a victory of reason over belief."
- "Marxism, disseminated on the popular level in the form of Communism, represented a major advance in man's ability to conceptualize his relationship to his world."
- "Marxism supplied the best available insight into contemporary reality."

Of course, McManus wrote, "nowhere does Mr. Brzezinski tell his readers that the Marxism 'in the form of Communism,' which he praises, has been responsible for the murder of approximately 100 million human beings in the Twentieth Century, has brought about the enslavement of over a billion more, and has caused want, privation and despair for all but the few criminals who run the communist-dominated nations."

Brzezinski supported central planning, "developing limitations on national sovereignty," and "the goal of world government."

Foreign-policy Disasters

Brzezinski's top job as national security advisor, along with Carter's little-known role as a founding director of the Trilateral Commission, might explain the major foreign-policy disasters that not only harmed American allies, but also endangered American national security.

U.S. and United Nations trade sanctions on Rhodesia crippled that nation,

and ended in the installment of Marxist revolutionary Robert Mugabe as prime minister even after earlier prime minister Ian Smith agreed to a free election that led to the victory of black leader Bishop Abel Muzorewa. But Muzorewa didn't suit Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and their British counterparts. Mugabe and another revolutionary radical terrorist, Joshua Nkomo, must be included in the government. New elections were held, and Mugabe won. Mugabe forced Nkomo to flee to England.

That was the end of any hope for Rhodesia, then renamed Zimbabwe. Once known as the breadbasket of Africa, the prosperous nation quickly collapsed into economic chaos and became unable to feed its own people.

Likewise, Carter terminated military assistance to then-ally Nicaragua, whose pro-American president, Anastasio Somoza, was under siege from communist Sandinista revolutionaries. They prevailed, forcing Somoza to flee and putting a Soviet-Cuban satellite on the Central American mainland.

Even CFR-Trilateral man Henry Kissinger, an alumnus of Richard Nixon's administration and President Gerald Ford's secretary of state, complained about Carter's misguided policies vis-à-vis Rhodesia and Nicaragua. In the former, Carter sided with "the radicals against the moderates," and with "ideological radical" revolutionaries.

In the latter, he said, "we did enough to unsettle the existing government but not enough to put over a moderate alternative, if there is one." There wasn't.

Carter also oversaw the takeover of once-modern Iran by savage Islamic radicals led by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Student revolutionaries seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. They seized 63 hostages in November 1979, freeing 10 soon afterward.

On April 16, 1980, Carter authorized Operation Eagle Claw, a joint mission of all four military services. It launched eight days later. It failed miserably, when the Navy's Sea Stallion helicopters, launched from the aircraft carrier USS *Nimitz*, flew into a haboob, a violent sandstorm. Carter aborted the mission, but not before a Sea Stallion hit a C-130 transport with extra fuel. Five airmen and three Marines died.

AP Images

Surrender: President Carter relinquished the Panama Canal to Panama. One observer called the giveaway "the greatest fraud ever perpetrated against the United States and against the American people."

Not until Reagan took office did Iran release the rest of the hostages.

Bye-bye Panama Canal

Perhaps Carter's greatest debacle was giving away the Panama Canal, not only because the canal was a monumental feat of American engineering, but also because its purpose was to strengthen the national security of the United States.

A need for a canal across the isthmus became evident during the Spanish-American War, the late Admiral Thomas Moorer wrote for *The New American* in 1999. To reach Cuba, warships on America's west coast had to sail around the tip of South America through one of three passages: the Strait of Magellan, the Beagle Channel through Tierra del Fuego, or the treacherous Drake Passage with 40-foot waves.

The canal removed those obstacles.

Americans built the canal pursuant to the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty. For $10 million and an annual payment of $250,000, the United States had a 10-mile wide, 51-mile long strip of land from the Pacific Ocean to Caribbean Sea. Cost of the canal: $375 million, some $13 billion today. The American Society of Civil Engineers calls it one of the "greatest civil engineering achievements of the 20th century."

Aside from that, however, the canal was vital to American national security, as Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote in 1913:

> The control of the Panama Canal is far more important to our national security than is the control of the Kiel Canal to that of Germany, or the Suez Canal to that of Great Britain. Its protection is more essential than the protection of any part of our coast or any of our seaports, however important, because it is the key to the protection of many seaports and thousands of miles of coastline.

So, naturally, Carter and his Deep State grifters had to pitch it away with both hands.

Moorer explained that the United States was "sleepwalking" into a national-security nightmare, given that Communist China was attempting to seize control of the canal through a company called Hutchison Whampoa.

In 1978, Moorer joined famed admirals George Anderson, Arleigh Burke, and Robert Carney — all former chiefs of naval operations — to beg Carter not to give away the canal. National security was paramount, of course. But the U.S. Senate had also agreed to two treaties that differed from those agreed to by Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos.

The first treaty gradually turned over the canal to Panama by 1999. The second made the canal neutral territory accessible to all nations. While Carter accepted a "reservation" from Democratic Arizona

California Historical Society

Fangirl: First lady Rosalynn Carter (left) campaigned for her husband with Peoples Temple founder Jim Jones (right) in San Francisco before the clergyman fled to Guyana and murdered almost 1,000 people. She was, one report said, "enthralled" with the cult leader.

Senator Dennis DeConcini, which gave the United States the right to use military force to keep the canal open, Panama's consent regardless, Carter nevertheless undermined it by giving Torrijos a secret counter-reservation requiring U.S. military intervention on the "principles of mutual respect and cooperation."

The U.S. Senate never saw that secret agreement.

"In other words," Moorer wrote, Carter and Torrijos wrote "a secret (and therefore invalid) treaty claim that the United States could not rightfully intervene in the canal without Panama's 'cooperation,' which is a complete repudiation of the DeConcini Reservation's defense guarantee."

Continued Moorer:

> The Panama Canal treaties ratified by the U.S. Senate are radically different from, and completely contrary to, the treaties agreed to by Torrijos. This makes them null and void, since both parties did not agree to the same document. Doctor Charles Breecher, one of the State Department's most knowledgeable treaty authorities, was certainly right in calling the Carter-Torrijos treaties "the greatest fraud ever perpetrated against the United States and against the American people."

What Moorer predicted came true. Thanks to a law the Panamanian legislature passed in 1997, Hutchison Whampoa — linked to China's intelligence apparatus and its military — received complete control of the canal zone. It could, if it wished, transfer its rights to another nation.

You didn't read that assessment of Carter — that he was the greatest con man in American history — in any of the many encomia to his ballyhooed "statesmanship."

Against that record, Carter's dismal economic policies, which led to almost 10-percent inflation and mortgage interest rates that peaked at 13.74 percent in 1980, then 16.63 percent in 1981, seem like a smashing success.

Cult Connection

Another facet of Carter's career that went unmentioned in the many hagiographies of him was his connection to Jim Jones, leader of the communist Peoples Temple church. Jones led a mass suicide and murder in Guyana two years into Carter's administration.

Jones wrote to first lady Rosalynn Carter in 1977 to solicit medical aid for Cuba. The First Lady replied with a handwritten note. Indeed, the first lady was "enthralled" with Jones, the Jonestown website of San Diego State University explains, when she campaigned in San Francisco with vice presidential pick Walter Mondale:

> She spoke from Jones's pulpit, and also had a private dinner with him at a posh San Francisco restaurant. They continued to correspond by letter after that. Rosalynn was obviously captivated with Jones. So it is logical to assume that she praised Jones in her subsequent conversations with her husband after he became president. And, upon receiving [a] letter from Harvey Milk a couple of years later [praising Jones], [Carter] no doubt recalled his wife's splendid memories of Jones.

Harvey Milk was, famously, the San Francisco supervisor and pedophile who was assassinated in his office. The U.S. Navy named a ship after him.

On November 18, 1978, Jones and his gang of cutthroats murdered U.S. Representative Leo Ryan and two journalists who went to Guyana to investigate the temple's activities. After those murders, Jones induced some 900 followers to drink Flavor Aid laced with cyanide. Those who refused were injected. Jones shot himself in the head.

Carter the "Humanitarian"

After he left office, Carter became a famous humanitarian who built houses for the needy with Habitat for Humanity, certainly a noble endeavor. But he spent a lot of his time violating the Logan Act, which, again, prohibits private diplomatic endeavors by citizens.

Though he was never charged, his activities in the Middle East and elsewhere bordered on treason.

Again, he tried to undermine President George H.W. Bush's coalition to oppose Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and also took it upon himself to meet with Hamas terrorist leaders in the Middle East.

As CNN's token GOP analyst Scott Jennings said after Carter shuffled off this mortal coil, "in the run-up to the Persian Gulf War, he wrote letters to all of our allies, and to Arab states, asking them to abandon their cooperation and coalition with the United States of America. If it's not treasonous, it's borderline treasonous."

Carter's humanitarianism aside, Jennings continued:

> When you're an ex-president and you have served in that office, I

> think you have a duty to the United States and only to the United States. And when he did that and other instances, to me, it showed that he cared more about his own legacy than he did about the country.

While Carter inappropriately called Israel an "apartheid state," wrote Professor Andrew Latham of the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy, his most "egregious misstep" was meeting with Hamas, a designated terror group:

> In meetings with Hamas leaders, Carter sought to portray the group as a legitimate political actor, advocating for their inclusion in peace negotiations. Dialogue is an essential part of conflict resolution, but Carter's approach seemed to overlook Hamas's explicit commitment to Israel's destruction and its long record of violence against civilians. His calls for understanding and engagement often lacked a corresponding emphasis on the necessity for Hamas to renounce terrorism and recognize Israel's right to exist.

His position on the Middle East regardless, a former president shouldn't involve himself in ex parte negotiations. A former president, after all, still appears to be an American official with plenipotentiary powers.

Continued Latham:

> Carter's defenders argue that his positions reflected a deep commitment to peace and justice. Indeed, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. But sincerity alone does not absolve one of the consequences of their actions. By failing to fully appreciate the asymmetry between a democratic state defending itself against terrorism and an organization committed to that state's annihilation, Carter's advocacy often did more harm than good.

Election Denier

Perhaps worse than that, Carter sought to undermine President Donald Trump's authority by becoming an honest-to-goodness election denier. He called Trump an "illegitimate president."

During Carter's appearance at his Carter Center in Leesburg, Virginia, in 2019, Deep State court historian Jon Meacham said U.S. intelligence had "proven" that Russia interfered in the 2016 election to help Trump. What, pray tell, did the great statesman think?

Replied Carter:

> Well, the president himself should condemn it, admit that it happened, which I think 16 [of the] intelligence agencies have already agreed to say. And there's no doubt that the Russians did interfere in the election. And I think the interference, although not yet quantified, if fully investigated would show that Trump didn't actually win the election in 2016. He lost the election, and he was put into office because the Russians interfered on his behalf.

Of course, Trump won that election. Meacham continued: "So, do you believe President Trump is an illegitimate president?"

Carter hesitated. The audience guffawed.

Carter: "Based on what I just said, which I can't retract, I would say yes."

In a final attempt to polish Carter's reputation before he died at 100 years old, making him the longest-lived president, his family hoked up a tall tale for the gullible worthies of the far-left, hate-Trump mainstream media. Think of Parson Weems, George Washington, the apple tree.

In hospice for more than a year, Carter supposedly voted by mail for Vice President Kamala Harris.

"My grandfather can't wait to vote for Kamala Harris," grandson Jason Carter said at the Democratic National Convention.

"He's following the campaign, absolutely," young Carter told CBS News of the near-comatose 39th president in September:

> And you know, when we asked him, was he excited about his 100th birthday, he said, "I'm excited about that but I'm really excited to vote for Kamala Harris." And so he is still engaged, he's still paying attention, and he's, you know, he's got his views.

On October 1, his 100th birthday, family members wheeled Carter out into the sunshine "to witness a military flyover with four fighter jets," CBS reported.

Video showed a man on the verge of death, who likely didn't know four fighter jets flew over, and who almost certainly didn't knowingly fill out a mail-in ballot to vote for Harris.

Given that Carter joined the chorus of hate-Trump election deniers, though we have no reason to believe his handlers didn't file a fraudulent ballot on his behalf. ■

AP Images

Disaster: After Iranian revolutionaries overthrew the then-reigning shah, they stormed the U.S. embassy to take 63 hostages in November 1979. They released 10 later in November. Carter presided over the disastrous Operation Eagle Claw rescue mission, and not until President Reagan was elected did Iran release the rest of the hostages.

Burglar Breaks In to Judge's Home

PennLive.com reported on December 30 about a home break-in in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in which a burglar picked the wrong house. A man identified as 36-year-old Charles Henson allegedly tried kicking down the front door of the home of Magisterial District Judge Mikaela Sloan. Witnesses say Henson kept yelling for someone named "J.C.," who he claimed owed him money. He allegedly kicked open the door and entered the home while continuing to yell threats aimed at "J.C."

Judge Sloan's boyfriend was there at the time, and he retrieved a firearm and went to confront the intruder. He yelled to Henson that nobody named "J.C." lived there, but Henson allegedly continued to advance. In fear for his life and the lives of Judge Sloan's children, who were asleep in the house, the boyfriend opened fire at Henson, narrowly missing him. Henson fled the home.

Police were soon called to the scene and, after a thorough investigation that included talking to witnesses and reviewing surveillance footage, arrested Henson for burglary and criminal trespassing.

"Meet Force With Force"

WBTV.com reported on December 30 out of Chesterfield County, South Carolina, about a robbery at a Mini-Mart that ended with a bang. Chesterfield County Sheriff Cambo Streater issued a press release in which he explained that deputies who arrived on the scene discovered the body of the deceased suspect.

Law-enforcement investigators watched footage from the surveillance cameras at the Mini-Mart and observed the suspect entering the small convenience store and holding a gun to the head of the clerk. The clerk quickly responded by pulling out his own gun and shooting the suspect multiple times.

It appears this was a justified use of lethal force, as explained by Streater in the press release: "A person who is not engaged in an unlawful activity and who is attacked in another place where he has a right to be, including his place of business, has no duty to retreat and has the right to stand his ground and meet force with force, including deadly force, if he reasonably believes it is necessary to prevent death or great bodily injury to himself or another person or to prevent the commission of a violent crime."

Dead on Arrival

KTSM.com reported out of La Luz, New Mexico, on December 20 about a home break-in that might have been a case of mistaken identity or caused by drugs and/or mental-health issues.

Police were called to a home after the homeowner said an intruder broke in shortly before 9:00 p.m. Police say the man was home with his wife and three small children, and the family was asleep when the suspect began pounding on the front door and demanding entrance to the home. The suspect eventually broke the door and entered the home, and was confronted by the armed father, who demanded he leave.

The suspect ignored the father's lawful commands and proceeded to walk toward the bedroom where the young children were sleeping. The father repeatedly argued with the suspect to stop, but he tried striking the father. At this point, the homeowner was left with no other option but to discharge his firearm at the suspect, mortally wounding him. Police soon arrived and discovered the body of the suspect, who was declared deceased at the time.

"You Should Expect to Be Shot"

FOX 13 News reported out of Bradenton, Florida, on December 27 about two masked intruders who chose the wrong home to target. Sheriff Rick Wells of the Manatee County Sheriff's Office explained in a news conference that around 9:00 p.m., a homeowner was alerted by a surveillance camera to two masked men creeping around the side of his home. The homeowner instructed his wife to seek shelter and call 911 while he armed himself and confronted the suspects. The husband fired multiple times at the masked intruders and seriously wounded one, who collapsed at the scene. The other fled on foot.

Police soon arrived and discovered 27-year-old Jorge Nestevan Flores-Toledo suffering from a gunshot wound. He was taken to a nearby medical facility for treatment, but later succumbed to his wounds. Police K9 units soon located the other suspect, 39-year-old Michel Soto-Mella, who was confirmed to be an illegal immigrant from Chile. Flores-Toledo was confirmed to be a Mexican national, although his immigration status was not yet reported at the time of this writing.

Sheriff Wells explained that the deceased suspect had an active warrant for parole violation after previously serving time for a residential burglary. He told reporters, "This is the state of Florida. If you want to break into someone's home, you should expect to be shot."

Stealing an Occupied Car?

Fort Myers News-Press reported on December 14 about a car thief in Lehigh Acres, Florida, who got quite a surprise when he discovered that there was an armed owner in the vehicle he was trying to steal. The incident occurred early on a Saturday morning, when the alleged car thief was attempting to break in to multiple vehicles and came across a parked car in a driveway.

The car owner was in his car ready to go to work when the would-be thief tried entering his vehicle. There was a physical altercation between the two men. The startled owner retrieved a loaded firearm and, in fear for his life, shot the suspect.

Police discovered the wounded suspect at the scene. He was transported to a nearby medical facility, where he was later pronounced dead. Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno explained in a press release, "Everyone deserves to feel safe on their own property…. The homeowner exercised their right to protect themselves, which unfortunately resulted in a loss of a life today." ■

— Patrick Krey

THE REVIEW

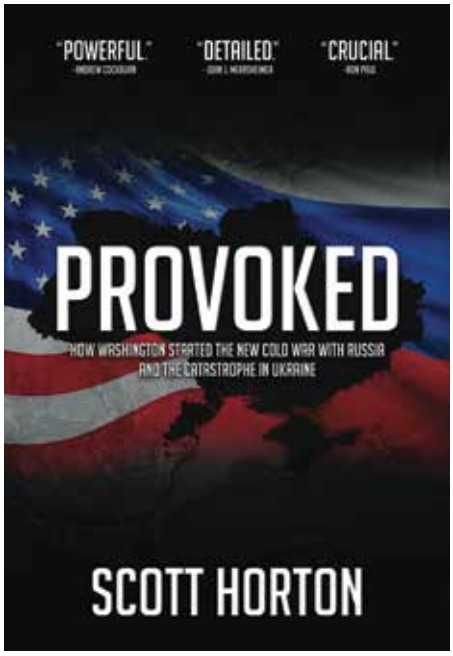
Foreign-policy Failure

by Veronika Kyrylenko

Provoked: How Washington Started the New Cold War With Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine**,** by Scott Horton, The Libertarian Institute, 2024, 690 pages, paperback.

Scott Horton's new book *Provoked: How Washington Started the New Cold War With Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine* offers a compelling critique of U.S. foreign policy and its role in the events leading up to the current war between Russia and Ukraine. The book challenges the dominant narrative promoted by Western media and the political Establishment, which has labeled Russia's 2022 invasion as an "unprovoked attack" on a peaceful, democratic nation. Horton argues that this depiction is misleading, and he traces a series of U.S. actions that contributed to the escalation.

Although he believes that Russia had alternatives to war in defending its interests, Horton argues that the United States bears significant responsibility for creating the conditions that led to the conflict.



He begins by examining Washington's post-Cold War policies, driven by neoconservative ambitions to maintain and expand American global hegemony. Instead of "going home" and embracing a vision of the United States as a "limited republic," policymakers pursued an imperial agenda. A central pillar of this strategy was NATO's eastward expansion, a process that Russia repeatedly warned would be seen as a direct threat to its security.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its thorough documentation of U.S. policy decisions, showing how every administration from George H.W. Bush to Joe Biden contributed to this expansionist strategy. Horton illustrates how George H.W. Bush's promise to Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not expand "one inch eastward" was quickly abandoned. Under Bill Clinton, NATO's membership grew to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, setting a precedent for further eastward expansion. George W. Bush's administration took it further, supporting NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine — moves that Russia's leadership viewed as openly hostile. Barack Obama's support for "color revolutions" and his administration's role in the 2014 Maidan uprising in Ukraine further exacerbated tensions. Horton highlights how this effort facilitated the rehabilitation of Ukrainian ultranationalism, with militant groups such as the Azov Battalion rising to prominence, adding a dangerous new dimension to the crisis.

The chapter on Donald Trump's presidency is one of the most revealing in the book. Despite Trump's rhetoric about improving relations with Russia, Horton shows that his administration's actions often did the opposite. For instance, Trump's approval of arms sales to Ukraine — something even Obama

had refrained from doing — marked a significant escalation. At the same time, the U.S. ramped up military training for Ukraine's armed forces and deepened intelligence cooperation. Trump also withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which banned ground-launched short- and medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles, and the Open Skies Treaty, which allowed mutual unarmed aerial surveillance among signatory countries. Moreover, he indicated that he would have allowed the New START nuclear-arms reduction treaty to expire in 2021 had he been reelected in 2020. "Trump was either a Russia hawk with the worst of them or he had no control over the Pentagon's world empire and its policies on such matters," writes Horton.

Last but not least, Horton notes that Trump, depicted as a "real internationalist" by his national security advisor, Robert O'Brien, never halted a "single" NATO deployment, but instead bolstered the alliance by pressuring members to raise defense spending.

This chapter illustrates a central theme of Horton's work: Even when a U.S. president attempts to shift course, entrenched interests and institutional inertia often preserve the status quo. Driven by "the blob" — a bipartisan network of policymakers, think tanks, defense contractors, and career diplomats — interventionist policies have endured across multiple administrations. Notably, while Horton is critical of most of the already-announced picks for key national security and foreign-policy positions under the second Trump administration, he holds out a glimmer of hope. He suggests that Trump's "resentment" toward his "establishment enemies" and his "personal negotiation style," which proved pivotal in restoring relations with North Korea, could offer a path toward a more independent and less interventionist foreign policy.

Finally, Horton delivers a scathing critique of the Biden administration, arguing that its strong support for Ukraine — including substantial military aid, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic backing — emboldened Kyiv to reject potential compromises with Moscow. By framing Ukraine's resistance as a heroic stand for democracy, the United States escalated the conflict, pushing it toward the brink of nuclear confrontation.

Horton's book also highlights the broader ideological underpinnings of U.S. foreign policy. He argues that neoconservatives have driven much of this agenda, fueled by a belief in American exceptionalism. The pursuit of "full-spectrum dominance" has led to perpetual wars, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya and Syria, with Ukraine being the latest flashpoint. Horton's critique of this ideology is sharp, and he contends that it runs contrary to the vision of the Founding Fathers, who sought a foreign policy based on "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations."

While the book focuses on U.S. culpability, Horton does not absolve Russia of blame. He stresses in interviews, "The book is not called *Justified*, it's called *Provoked*." He argues that other options were available to Russia besides war, and recognizes the suffering and destruction caused by the invasion. Further, he maintains that the war's political and military consequences have been a disastrous "Pyrrhic Victory" for Moscow: Ukraine's military capacity has grown with Western aid, its population's hostility toward Russia has solidified, and NATO's resolve to expand its influence has only strengthened.

Scott Horton

Stubb05/Creative Commons

Critics have accused Horton of being overly sympathetic to Russia's perspective or downplaying Ukraine's agency. However, the careful reader will see that Horton's aim is to reveal the broader context that made the current war more likely. His work challenges readers to see the conflict as part of a longer chain of cause-and-effect relationships rather than an isolated event. Most importantly, Horton's analysis remains firmly rooted in U.S. interests. "I am a Texan, and I am a patriot, and I don't care at all about Russia or its interests. This book is about what's good for the United States of America," he told Ron Paul and Daniel McAdams in a December interview on *The Ron Paul Liberty Report*.

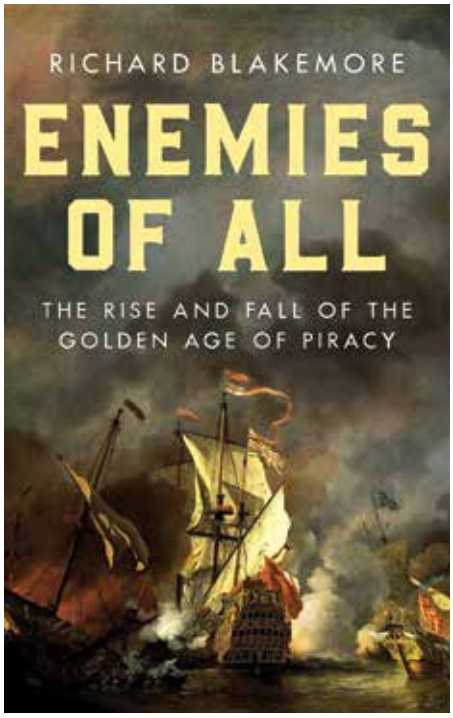
Provoked: How Washington Started the New Cold War With Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine is an essential read for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the ongoing war. By exposing the policies that led to the conflict, Horton sheds light on the broader consequences of American empire building. His work serves as a stark reminder of how foreign-policy decisions, often made behind closed doors, can have catastrophic effects on the world stage. For those weary of simplistic "good vs. evil" narratives, Horton's book offers a sobering, well-documented alternative perspective.

It is worth noting that Horton's viewpoints were influenced by his collaboration with the late William Norman Grigg, a former senior editor of *The New American* magazine. Together, they co-founded The Libertarian Institute, a platform dedicated to challenging interventionist foreign policy and exposing government overreach. Grigg, known for his principled stance against state power and his eloquent defense of civil liberties, left a lasting imprint on Horton's approach to critiquing U.S. foreign policy and the entrenched interests driving it. ■

Pirates, Plunderers, and Buccaneers

by William P. Hoar

***Enemies of All: The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age of Piracy*,** by Richard Blakemore, New York: Pegasus Books, 2024, 336 pages, hardcover.



Why is pirating so addictive? They say, goes the frivolous response, that once ye lose yer first hand, ye get hooked.

Don't let that glib comment misguide you. While there is plenty of swashbuckling to consider here, and author Richard Blakemore does have his fun here and there, *Enemies of All: The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age of Piracy* is a serious, well-researched history of piracy, plundering, and buccaneering — and what those terms really mean and how they differ, even with distinctions in several languages.

After he weighs anchor, Blakemore goes back — repeatedly, perhaps too often for some readers — to related terminology, noting how it is used (and should be employed) academically, historically, and in popular fashion. As he admits, "The linguistic variety is bewildering, but this very complexity conveys a crucial point. Not all plundering by sea was piracy, in the strict sense. The status and perception of maritime raiding varied according to circumstances."

Then, having gone through such distinctions and similarities, we find out that what we thought was clear gets further muddled. Some 80-plus pages later, we are told, "While the contours of legal plundering shifted, the concept of a 'pirate' did not. A pirate was not just someone who plundered without licence, but someone who did so *without good reason*, for private gain rather than for public purpose, raiding indiscriminately instead of targeting legitimate enemies. Commentators often compared them to bandits and robbers." (Emphasis in original.)

Many in the cast of characters might have familiar names, but readers will undoubtedly learn that what they knew — or thought they knew — was a bit off keel. There are other personalities that will probably be new, or unexpected. Here are just some of those we get to meet: Francis Drake, Henry Morgan (of Captain Morgan rum fame), Edward Teach (often called "Blackbeard"), Bartholomew Roberts ("Black Bart"), Henry Every, William Kidd ("Captain Kidd"), Charles Vane, John Rackham ("Calico Jack"), Anne Bonny, and Mary Read.

Readers get introduced to historic descriptions found in works with unusual names — two in particular: *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Notorious Pyrates*, with a pseudonymous author, which first appeared in 1724, and *De Americaensche Zeeroovers* (1678), by Alexandre Exquemelin. Both had multiple editions (and are generally abbreviated herein as the *General History* and *Zee-roovers*). They are, we are told, the two most impactful books on the history of piracy, so, as you might guess, they are referred to frequently.

The term "enemies of all," which serves as the book's title, also has a complicated history, and has been linked to, among other things, a phrase used by Cicero when prosecuting Gaius Verres, the governor of Sicily. When discussing buccaneers/plunderers, the author writes that they "usually sailed with lawful commissions during global wars, and found support in French, English and other colonies. They cannot easily be categorized as 'enemies of all' either, but their actions [did cause] increasing trouble for imperial rulers."

While piracy has existed worldwide and in all eras, the book under review, as the author says, is concerned with "what afficionados of piratical history often call the 'golden age,'" though that label wasn't used by the pirates themselves. When coined in the 1890s, he points out, the term "referred to the later decades of the seventeenth century, but some historians have stretched it to cover the period roughly from 1650 to 1730, and others have shrunk and shifted it to the 1710s and 1720s — the decades that featured Teach and his chums and the *General History*."

Meanwhile, get ready to have your timbers shivered.

Captain Morgan Is More Than Rum

Richard Blakemore has been writing and teaching about historical piracy and maritime empires for more than a decade, starting with his Ph.D. at Cambridge University and continuing with postdoctoral work at Oxford University. He is an associate professor in social and maritime

Richard Blakemore

x.com/historywomble

history at the University of Reading. Blakemore dedicates *Enemies of All* to his students.

The two reference books listed above, he says, also are handy for exercises in his class. I would bet a pile of pieces of eight (generally referred to as *pesos*, short for *pesos de ocho*, in the book) that a piracy professor is quite popular with undergrads.

The volume that he navigates has three partitions, entitled "Buccaneers," "Turning Tides," and "Black Flag," with those, respectively, jumping off from Port Royal, Jamaica, in June of 1692; the Arabian Sea in September of 1695; and Cape Coast Castle, West Africa (a former trading post in today's Ghana), in March/April 1722 — giving you a hint of the book's breadth.

Not to slight the author's thoroughness (though it does get a bit tangled in seaweed on occasion with his processions of names, dates, and places), Blakemore does give readers quite a few spots to (figuratively) turn down a page when he sprinkles us with captivating (for some) snippets. Here's one: We learn that the word "buccaneer" comes from the French *boucan*. It is apparently a corruption from Arawak or Tupi, and means "a frame for smoking meat." And we are told that the "first buccaneers were not pirates or maritime raiders of any sort, but hunters." If that is going to be on a class quiz, you're ahead of the game.

Here's another morsel from Blakemore: Were you aware that Bermuda was settled by accident in 1609 when a ship bound for Jamestown wrecked there, "possibly inspiring Shakespeare's *The Tempest*"? Now you know.

For a transition, we'll resurrect a line from that play, when Ferdinand (after he abandons ship) cries out, "Hell is empty and all the devils are here." This brings us to Henry Morgan, who, as Blakemore puts it, "has come to stand as a symbol of the buccaneering era." He is a major player in the chapter titled "All the Rogues in These Seas," which includes graphics from foreign editions of *Zee-roovers* (although he is misnamed in those centuries-old versions).

The Welshman is "flashily dressed and heroically posed" on bottles of Captain Morgan rum, it may be recalled. But in this work's graphic representations — the book has quite a few, as well as portraits and (just-middling) maps — Morgan looks more like he's been struck with over-eating or over-imbibing. "Flashy" may be a relative term, but what jumps more to mind from these images is pillage idiot.

Henry Morgan

There's much more on why Morgan and his crew of buccaneers became well known (in this excerpt jumping past the tortures and treatment of women). One 1668 episode involved Morgan's Anglo-Spanish wartime attacks on towns and castles in (modern) Panama. (One weakness of *Enemies of All* is its all-too-frequent omission of relevant places on the globe; not everyone knows ancient names and current locales. That's why book editors used to be much more common.)

On a positive note, we do get distilled action. As Blakemore notes, though there had been a warning by a scout canoe and gunfire was heard, the "citizens of Portobelo were unprepared." (The fortified town was then called Porto Belo; the book uses the modern name.) "As the drum beat for the militia to gather," we read, "many townspeople instead tried to hide their riches, or fled, or simply ignored the summons. The buccaneers rushed through the streets, to the incomplete castle of San Geronimo [some sources render it as San Jeronimo] in the harbor, led by the escaped [English] prisoners who had been labouring on it; the terrified castellan swiftly surrendered." Subsequently, we read:

> It took about half an hour from the buccaneers first reaching Santiago [in Panama] to capturing San Geronimo. The sun was only just rising. The buccaneers looted through the streets, seizing the royal treasury, where they freed still more English prisoners. Others went to the hospital and convent. They detained the city's survivors, those who had not escaped, in the biggest church.
>
> To finish off Santiago, Morgan adopted a ruthless ploy that has become part of his legend. He forced the mayor and some friars, nuns, and old men to walk ahead of his soldiers. Alexandre Exquemelin described this episode with savage relish in his *Zee-roovers*, and though Morgan later denied it, the official Spanish reports back up Exquemelin on this occasion.

There was much more action, and looting, and allegations about "wine and women," before a ransom was paid lest the city be burned. The plundering buccaneers (the survivors, that is), per the author, probably wound up with around the equivalent of "eight to ten years' wages for a merchant sailor."

Also covered is how Morgan subsequently became "a leading figure" in the "campaign against his erstwhile profession." Chapters later we find him as a planter and slaveholder "with an estate of 6,000 acres and 109 enslaved people at the time of his death." In 1679-1680, he held the offices of deputy governor, lieutenant governor, vice admiral, colonel commandant of the Port Royal regiment, justice of the peace, and public recordkeeper.

How Blackbeard's Head Wound Up on a Bowsprit

With space considerations, we can only hint here at the legends of Henry Every and Willam Kidd. Blakemore has the details and much more beyond. As the professor explains, the meaning of "plundering, in both legal and moral terms, was

still subject to a diversity of opinions, and not everyone agreed that the Red Sea (or the South Sea) raiders were pirates." Indeed, he goes on, it was the efforts of "both colonial officials and Whitehall administrators to impose their definition of piracy that transformed its legal framework and its popular image."

We come back to the concepts of legends and images repeatedly. And why not? That is largely why we still have eye-patched pirates in movies and games and on TV shows. Would "Blackbeard" be so interesting if he were just a "privateer"? Yet, *Enemies of All* shows that side too. That's what good historians do — which means that we also spot Edward Teach cruising off Virginia and Delaware Bay as a commissioned privateer. (We also get to see a bit of a young Thomas Paine — of *The Rights of Man* fame — as a buccaneer or privateer apparently being found in Rhode Island with a forged commission). It's a treat to see the more complete picture of such people.

Still, while reading *Enemies of All*, what was in the back of this reviewer's mind was an unrelated 1962 John Ford movie, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, starring James Stewart and John Wayne. It contained a line that became famous: "This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Here, Blakemore has given us both. Choose accordingly. Here's one section (on page 232) of note, involving Lieutenant Robert Maynard of the HMS *Pearl* (though that ship is not mentioned in the book). In November 1718, the officer encountered Teach, his quarry, "fraternizing with a local sloop." Here's the passage:

> Having lost the element of surprise, Maynard and Teach apparently engaged in a shouting match over the water, with Maynard warning Teach that he intended to take him dead or alive, at which Teach supposedly demanded a glass of wine and "swore damnation to himself" if he offered, or received, quarter. Teach's swivel guns took a heavy toll on Maynard's crew as the ships closed, but the naval sailors shot away some of Teach's rigging and sails to prevent him escaping.

The locale, according to other sources, was near Ocracoke Island, part of North Carolina's Outer Banks. Blakemore continued:

> As the two ships clashed together, an almost cinematic scene unfolded, according to various accounts. Maynard and Teach first dueled man to man as the battle raged around them. Then a Scottish highlander serving with Maynard struck Teach with such a blow that it severed his head. Apparently they found one African sailor below decks preparing to blow up the ship. The dramatic end to his piratical career did much to embellish Teach's legend afterward.

The British ship was said to have returned to Virginia with the severed head of Blackbeard hanging from the bowsprit.

Here's a related factoid to consider, as offered 16 chapters into Blakemore's book: "Somewhere between 400 and 600 pirates were executed between 1716 and 1726." So, while a few of the *dramatis personae* may well stick with your memory, it's not the healthiest of careers to emulate.

Among other incidents that occurred after the "golden era of piracy," Blakemore briefly brings up the U.S. expedition in Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. If the American aspect of the subject is your prime interest, here are two volumes to consider: *Patriot Pirates: The Privateer War for Freedom and Fortune in the American Revolution* by Robert H. Patton (the grandson of the World War II hero), 2008; and *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War That Changed American History*, by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger, published in 2015 — which ends with the memory jog that the war that began on Jefferson's watch was resolved under James Madison's.

In the final pages of *Enemies of All*, we are reminded that the "golden age" of pirates wasn't the end (or beginning) of piracy. Blakemore mentions Alexander the Great's encounter with an arrested pirate, who allegedly to said to him, "I do it with a small ship, I am called a thief; you, with a great army, are called an emperor." The author could also have mentioned the young Julius Caesar and his capture by pirates (as reported by Plutarch). As the story goes, he mocked the pirates for setting the ransom for him too low and vowed to have them executed when he was freed. He did just that, reportedly crucifying his erstwhile captors. (I offer this incident, gratis, for consideration in a second edition of *Enemies of All*.)

If this book prompts you toward legends, maybe you'll repeat what Professor Blakemore did the night before he completed his book. "I read the first two chapters of *Treasure Island* to my son," he recalls. "He tells me I do a passable pirate voice." Been there, done that. ■

***Capture of the Pirate, Blackbeard, 1718* by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris**

Library of Congress

THE LAST WORD

Will the Red-hot California Fires Red-pill Americans?

by Selwyn Duke

AP Images

When all is said and done, the wildfires raging in and around Los Angeles may be the worst natural disaster in American history in terms of scope and cost. But did it have to be this way? For sure, there are factors beyond man's control, such as the fierce Santa Ana winds and Southern California's dry environment. Then, however, there are the controllable factors: Having quota (DEI) hires in the Los Angeles Fire Department's upper echelons, failure to be proactive (authorities *did* have advance warning of extreme fire danger), poor forest management, not maintaining water stocks, and vagrancy's normalization. (Approximately 50 percent of *all* Los Angeles fires are set by vagrants, according to reporter Michael Shellenberger.) But then, though it's the hardest of ways to learn a lesson, there may be one silver lining in this very tragic cloud: More Americans may be waking up to the wages of woke governance.

To wit: "The Left is no longer getting away with blaming climate change for wildfire disasters," wrote British publication *The Telegraph* January 11. "Instead, residents whose homes have been ravaged have rightly turned their ire on those in charge." Apropos to this, ex-*New York Times* editor Bari Weiss said recently that the "fire is happening in a context of total incompetency" and put the onus on officials such as Governor Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass.

Yet another significant factor is recent victories over the censorship cartel. Entrepreneur Elon Musk has made X largely a free-speech platform, and Mark Zuckerberg has now vowed to follow suit with Facebook (we'll see if that materializes). Most significantly, we apparently have reached a tipping point: The "alternative" media is becoming mainstream and the erstwhile mainstream media is increasingly marginalized. It can no longer control the "narrative" (at least for the present).

So information now flows with greater freedom, and what's learned by more people than ever is interesting. For instance, the liberal *Los Angeles Times* recently wrote, paraphrasing wildfire expert Jack Cohen, that we must shift "the conversation away from climate change ... because it gives us more control over our fire environment and will ultimately make us less vulnerable to these disasters. 'We don't have to solve climate change in order to solve our community wildfire risk problem,'" Cohen stated. Elaborating, the paper then quoted fire historian Stephen Pyne, a professor emeritus at Arizona State University. "'We don't necessarily need a trillion-dollar program and a fire czar to get control of the fire problem,' Pyne said. 'What we need are a thousand things that tweak the environment in favorable ways such that we can prevent these eruptions.'"

"For example, municipal and fire prevention agencies must give property owners advance — and continual — warnings to clear dead vegetation and to wet dry brush within 10 feet of the house with periodic, prolonged sprinklings," the *Times* continued. What a radical revelation: State and local officials must tend to kitchen-table concerns.

Instead, though, we have "leaders who are putting niche, luxury issues, ideological issues, over and above the most fundamental things: keeping you and your family safe from crime [and] fires," the aforementioned Weiss also stated. One example is that California and federal officials spent millions of dollars the last two years to incorporate "indigenous knowledge" into government fire mitigation regimes. The kicker: This knowledge reflects science in prescribing controlled burns (though the Indians apparently embraced them for cultural and/or hunting purposes, and their burns weren't always very "controlled"), yet such burns have been *prohibited by the government* in deference to greentopians.

Of course, most of us are not fire-mitigation experts. But something is for certain: Anytime you prioritize anything, worthwhile or woke, other things move down on the list. Competence cannot be your number one goal if diversity occupies that spot.

But then there's that good news, relating to the tipping point: I suspect it will only make people madder if pusillanimous pols now try blaming the fires on climate change. For the political climate could be changing, and maybe, just perhaps, we'll see some hair-gel politicians' careers go up in smoke. ■

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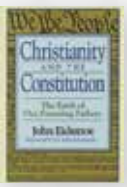

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